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LIVING IN THE MIDDLE AGES

I

A.D. 460. Benna, a Saxon chief, lands in Britain with his followers and founds a village —now called Bennington

YOU have heard about the Romans, who ruled Britain a long time ago. The Roman soldiers had to go away at last to fight enemies who were attacking Rome.

When there were no Romans left to protect Britain, people called Angles and Saxons began sailing across the North Sea and landing in Britain. They came from the countries we now call Holland and Germany. The Britons fought hard, but they were not strong enough to drive the Angles and Saxons away.

The Angles and Saxons did not come with big armies. A few came at a time, under a leader, or chief.

One day, a Saxon chief named Benna called his sons and daughters, his brothers and sisters, his cousins, and all their families, together and said:

"Many of our friends have sailed away to Britain. We will go too, and will make a home for ourselves in that rich land."

So they built boats to carry them and their weapons, and anything they wanted to take with them, and they set out.

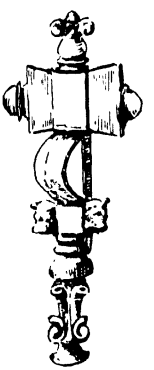
The winds and waves carried them to a spot on the coast of Britain, near a little village. Benna and the other Saxons leapt out on to the shore.

Benna was tall and fierce-looking. He wore a helmet of iron on his

BENNA AND HIS WARRIORS

head. His tunic reached to his knees and had little iron rings sewn all over it. He wore a leather belt round his waist and a bright blue cloak over his shoulders, fastened in front with a big gold brooch. His sword was long and heavy, and he carried a round shield painted in bright colours. Some of the other Saxons carried axes and spears.

The poor Britons were very frightened when they saw the Saxons coming. Many ran away and hid in the woods.



SAXON BROOCH

Some brave ones stayed to fight, but Benna and the men of his tribe were fierce and strong, and they soon conquered the Britons. They killed some and took others prisoner, and then burnt down their village.

Then Benna cried,

"Come, let us find a good safe place for our new home."

They went on into the country until they came to a level place in a forest, near a little river.

"This is a good place," cried Benna. "We will stay here."

The Saxons set to work to clear away the bushes and chop down the trees and make a clear space. Then they put a strong fence round the clearing, so that enemies and wild animals could not get in.

Next they built a house for Benna and his family, and smaller huts for the other men and women, until they had a little village.

They cut down more trees, and cleared land round the village. Then they could grow things to eat, and keep pigs and cows and sheep.

In time other Saxons came with their chiefs and cleared land and built villages round about.

In the language the Saxons spoke the word "ing" meant "family of." So the people who came with Benna were called the Bennings. That means "the family of Benna."

Another Saxon word was "ton." It meant a place with a fence round it, like the village the Bennings had made. So Benna's village was called Bennington.

Another Saxon word that meant a village, or a home, was "ham." If you look at a map of England you will see that many towns and villages have names ending in "ham" or "ton." They are places where a Saxon chief and his followers settled hundreds of years ago.

In time, the Angles and Saxons conquered nearly all that part of Britain we now call England. The name "England" comes from Angle-land, or the land where the Angles live.

THE CLEARING BENNA'S PEOPLE MADE IN THE FOREST.

The Angles and Saxons formed a number of little kingdoms, each with its own king. There was a king of Kent, a king of Northumbria, which was the land north of the river Humber, and so on.

2

How the Bennings became Christians, and how the Danes came and burnt down the village

THE Angles and Saxons worshipped gods with such names as Thor and Woden. They believed their gods were very strong and fierce, and that they liked men to be the same.

Many years after Benna died, the chief in the village of Bennington was a descendant of Benna called Aelfrith. One day, a servant ran into Aelfrith's house crying:

"Master, there is a strange man outside. He is talking to the people about a new god."

Aelfrith hurried out and stood listening. The preacher was telling the people about Jesus. He said that his God was a God of love who liked people to be kind and gentle.

Aelfrith did not have the preacher driven away. He took him into his house and asked him all kinds of questions about the new religion. He found it was called Christianity. The preacher told Aelfrith that the king of Kent and all his people had become Christians.

After a time Aelfrith and his people decided that they would stop believing in Thor and Woden and the other gods and would worship the Christian God. So they all trooped down to the river and the preacher dipped them in the water and baptized them.

Then they made a beautiful stone cross and set it up on the village green, where the preacher had first taught them about Christianity.

Later on, Aelfrith built a little wooden church for the villagers, and a house near it for a priest to live in.

THE CROSS THE PEOPLE OF BENNINGTON PUT UP AFTER THEY BECAME CHRISTIANS.

Gradually all the Angles and Saxons became Christians. Then they became less savage and fierce.

Some Christians decided that they wanted to spend the whole of their lives worshipping God and teaching others about Christianity. They felt they could do this better if they left the busy world and lived quietly together somewhere. Men who did this were called monks, and the houses they lived in were called

monasteries. The head of a monastery was called the Abbot.

When women left the world in this way they were called nuns, and their head was called the Abbess.

When people became monks or nuns they promised never to marry, and they gave up any money or land they had. They ate very simple food, and they did not wear any jewels or bright colours as other people did. They worked very hard farming the land round the monastery. Some monks in Saxon times went on long journeys in order to teach people who had not yet heard about Jesus. Some of them spent most of their time studying, and became very learned. They could read books written in Greek and Latin, and sometimes they wrote books themselves, about history and the stars and all kinds of other things.

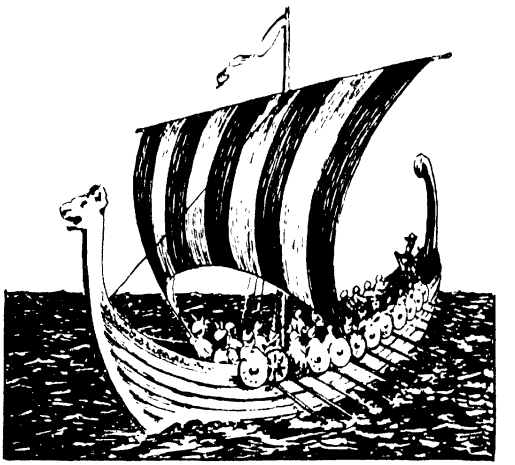
In Saxon times all books had to

be written by hand, so in every monastery there were monks who spent all their time copying the Bible and other holy books. Their writing was so beautiful, and they decorated the books with such lovely pictures in gold and bright colours, that they became famous all over Europe. We call books written by hand "manuscripts."

A group of monks built themselves a monastery on a hill a few miles from Bennington. At first they had only one big room, or hall, in which they all lived and slept, and a little wooden church.

Even after the Saxons had all become Christians there was still a great deal of fighting, because the different little kingdoms often quarrelled with each other.

Then, nearly three hundred and fifty years after Benna and his family came to Britain, other people began to cross the North Sea. They were



The Vikings in their Ship

called Danes, or Norsemen, and they came from the countries that are now Denmark and Norway and Sweden. Often we call them Vikings, because, in their language, to go "viking" meant to sail over the sea looking for adventure.

The Danes were not Christians, and they were as fierce as the Angles and Saxons had been when they first came.

The people of Bennington often heard tales of the cruel Danes. Then one day a number of Danes landed on the coast not far from Bennington. Soon the Saxons saw fifty or sixty warriors coming over the hill, waving their great swords and shouting. They carried a flag on which there was a black raven.

The women and children and old people ran away and hid. The men seized their swords and spears and fought, but the Danes were stronger than they were. Soon the Saxons who were not killed or wounded had to run away too.

Then the Danes rushed into the village. When they had gone and the people of Bennington crept back, they found their church and their houses had been burnt down. The priest had stayed with his church, and he had been killed.

The Danes had taken away all

VIKING WARRIORS CARRYING THE RAVEN FLAG

the beautiful gold and silver things that had belonged to the church, and anything else they could find.

The same kind of thing kept happening all over Britain. At first the Danes just landed, burned down villages, killed people, stole what they could, and then sailed away again. But after a time they began to stay.

At one time they conquered nearly the whole of England. That part of England, however, which is south of the river Thames and which was called Wessex, was still kept by the Saxons, and a great king of Wessex called Alfred at last managed to defeat the Danes. Then they promised to become Christians, and to stay in the north and east of England and leave the rest alone.

The part of England where the Danes lived was called the Danelaw.

In the language the Danes used, the word "by" meant a farm or a village. If you look on a map of England you will find many towns and villages in the north with names

ending in "by." Derby is one and Whitby is another. These are all places where the Danes settled.

3

What Bennington was like in late Saxon times when the whole of England had one king

IN time the whole of England became one kingdom under one king. Sometimes the king was a Saxon and sometimes he was a Dane.

Some of the kings were strong and wise and tried to make laws that would keep England peaceful and safe, and the people happy.

The country was divided into several parts, called "shires," and the king chose someone to be the chief man in each shire. He was called an earl. About twice a year a meeting called a shire court was held,

at which people who had broken the law were tried and punished.

The shires were divided into smaller parts, called "hundreds," and a court called the hundred court was held every four weeks.

In Saxon times there were no policemen to find out if a man had done something wrong and take him to the court to be tried. So it was the law that every man must be one of a group of about ten men, called a tithing, with a man at the head called the tithing man. If one man in the tithing broke the law, the others had to catch him and bring him to the court.

One day a tithing man rushed into Bennington and called the men of his tithing together.

"Our neighbour Wilfred has quarrelled with Offa, from the next village, and has stabbed him with his knife," he cried, "and I fear Offa

is badly hurt. Wilfred has fled into the forest. Come—we must catch him."

The men of the tithing ran into the forest to look for Wilfred, and the tithing man's little boy, Elric, ran with them.

"What will happen if we don't find Wilfred?" he panted.

"'Twill be bad for all of us in his tithing," answered his father, "for we must take him to the hundred court to be tried, and if we don't we shall be fined."

"What will happen to him at the court?" asked Elric.

"If he has hurt Offa really badly he will have to pay him money so much if it is his leg that is hurt, so much if it is his eye, and so on. But if Offa is dead, then will he be ordered to pay two hundred shillings to Offa's family, since Offa is a ceorl."

By this time the villagers who farmed the land were called ceorls.

We still use the word "churl" sometimes when we speak of a rough, rude kind of countryman. It comes from the Saxon word ceorl.

"It's a good thing Offa is not a thane," said Elric. "Wilfred would have to pay far more then, wouldn't he?"

"Indeed he would," said his father. "Twelve hundred shillings must a man pay if he kills a thane."

In late Saxon times the chiefs were called thanes. They had to serve the king and fight for him when he needed them.

As well as the thanes and the ceorls there were a great many slaves in Saxon England. They had no land of their own, and if anyone killed one of them he had to pay only forty pence.

Just then someone called out that they had seen Wilfred creep behind a bush. The tithing men had quite

a fight with him before they could get him back to Bennington. Then they had to look after him and take him to the hundred court when the time came. They were all very angry with him for giving them so much trouble, and so was the thane of Bennington, whose name was Edgar.

Luckily Offa did not die, but one of his arms had been so badly cut that he would never be able to use it properly again, so Wilfred was ordered to pay Offa quite a lot of money, and the men of his tithing had to promise to see that the money was paid.

By this time there were far more people living in Bennington than there had been at first. They had ploughed up nearly all the land near the village because they needed as much food as they could grow. The ploughed land was divided into three big fields. Each year crops were

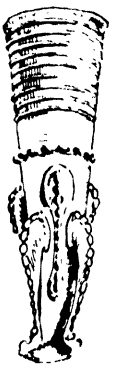
grown in two of the fields, and the third field rested because the land would not go on growing good crops if it was used every year.

There was a big meadow, too, in which the grass was allowed to grow, so that the villagers had hay for their animals in the winter. After the hay was cut the animals were allowed to graze in the meadow. At other times they grazed on the waste land away from the village, beyond the ploughed fields, and the cowherd, the shepherd and the swineherd looked after them and protected them from wolves and other wild animals.

Every ceorl in Bennington held a certain amount of land, so much in each of the three fields. He had the hay from his part of the meadow, too, and he could put so many animals to graze on the waste.

Edgar, the thane, lived in a bigger

house than those the ceorls lived in. It was like a big barn, with a fire burning in the middle. At meal times tables were put up on each side of the hall, and Edgar sat in the middle on the north side. The chief guest, if there was one, sat opposite to him, on the south side.



A Saxon Glass

Each man used his own knife to cut up his food. They drank from horns, or from beautiful goblets of yellow, blue and green glass. Some of their bowls and dishes were of wood, but others were of bronze and were beautifully made and decorated.

Edgar and his wife and their friends all wore brightly coloured tunics and cloaks fastened with big gold and silver brooches set with coloured stones. They were especially fond of garnets, which are red, and

of a stone called lapis lazuli, which is blue. They wore strings of beads made from big lumps of amber, amethyst, crystal, jet and other coloured stones, and they wore silver and gold bangles and pendants.

The Saxon jewellers and metalsmiths were very clever. Their beautiful work, like the books the monks wrote in the monasteries, was very famous in other countries.

In some places the Saxons built fine stone churches and monastery buildings, but Bennington, like most small villages, was content with its little wooden church.

SAXON DRINKING-HORN.

4

A.D. 1066. The Normans conquer England, and the Saxons in Bennington have a Norman lord over them instead of a Saxon thane

ONE day, when the Saxons had been living in Bennington for nearly six hundred years, a man rode into the village. He stopped to tell the thane some news before he went on.

"Our saintly King Edward is dead," he said.

"That is sad news," said the thane, whose name was Cerdic. "Who will be king now, since Edward had no children? I have heard that Edward promised the kingdom to his cousin, William, Duke of Normandy, but we want no Norman king here in England."

"Harold, the Earl of Wessex, has been crowned king," said the man.

Normandy is in the north of France, and when Duke William heard that the English had chosen Harold as king, he was very angry.

He called his barons and knights together and they made plans to try to conquer England.

So, one September day in the year 1066, another man rode into Benningtón, this time with terrible news.

"The Normans have landed on the south coast," he said. "They came in seven hundred ships, bringing horses and weapons and even wood with which to build a fort.

"Where is King Harold?" cried Cerdic.

"Alas, he is in the north of England," cried the other man, "for the King of Norway has also attacked us. But messengers have carried the news to him, and he is travelling south with all speed. I go to join him."

"And I too," cried Cerdic.

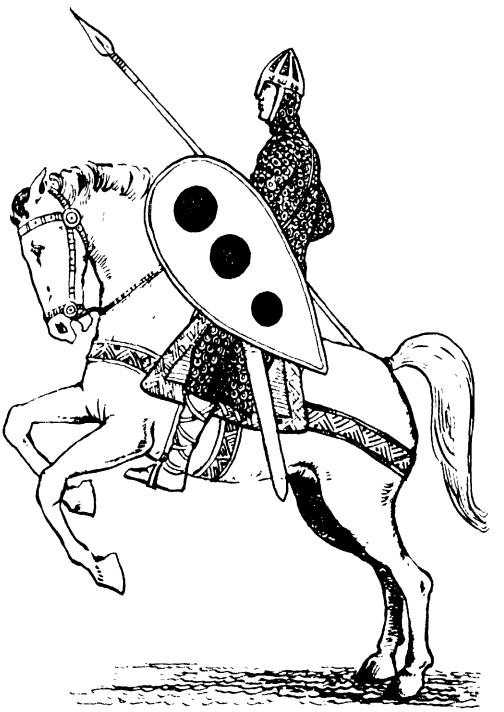
Cerdic put his helmet on his head, and buckled his sword round his waist. Then he took up his shield, mounted his horse and rode away. A servant went with him.

Cerdic joined King Harold and his warriors, and they went southwards until they came to the place where William and his Normans were. Then there was a great battle.

The Saxon thanes gathered round King Harold, and they all fought very bravely. But one by one they were killed. At last Cerdic himself fell dead; and soon after, a Norman arrow struck Harold through the eye and he too was killed.

The place where the Normans and the Saxons fought is now called Battle. It is near Hastings. If you go there you will see that a stone has been put up on the spot where Harold was killed.

Cerdic's servant went back very



A Norman Knight.

sadly to Bennington and told the people what had happened.

"Alas," they cried, "what will

become of us now that our thane is dead, and our king too?"

Soon news came to Bennington that William of Normandy had been crowned King of England. Then news came that William was dividing the land between the Norman barons who had come over with him and helped him to conquer the Saxons. In return for their land the barons had to promise to be faithful to William and to come with a certain number of knights to fight for him when he needed them.

The part of England in which Bennington stood had been given to a baron named Roland de Tournville.

The Norman barons divided their land among their followers. One day some Normans rode into Bennington. One of them was a knight named Geoffrey, and Roland de Tournville had given Bennington to him. He was the new lord.

In return for Bennington, Sir Geoffrey had promised to fight for the baron when he needed him.

The people of Bennington did not like having a Norman lord instead of Cerdic. But there was nothing they could do about it.

5

A.D. 1086. The making of Domesday Book

TWENTY years after William of Normandy became King of England, a little Saxon boy named Edda lived in Bennington.

One day two strange Normans came to the village. They asked all kinds of questions about the village and the people who lived in it. Then one of them began to write, while the other told him what to put down.

Edda was standing close to the

NORMANS GETTING INFORMATION TO PUT IN DOMESDAY BOOK.

Normans, so he could hear what was being said.

"Geoffrey holds the manor of Roland de Tournville. Cerdic held it of King Edward," said the Norman.

Edda knew that the "manor" was the village and all the land belonging to it. He was too young to remember Cerdic, the Saxon thane. But his father had told him how Cerdic had died fighting the Normans, and that Bennington had been given to Geoffrey by Roland de Tournville. Geoffrey was called the lord of the manor, and the baron was his overlord.

The Norman went on to say how much land belonged to the manor, and how much of it was used for growing food. Some of the land was for the lord of the manor's own use, and some of it was meadow land, where the villagers grew hay on which to feed their animals in the winter.

All this was written down, and how much money everything was worth.

"There are two freemen," went on the Norman, "thirteen villeins and seven bordars."

Edda understood what this meant, too.

Freemen held land in the manor in return for swearing to be true to Geoffrey and to fight for him if he needed them. Sometimes freemen paid the lord something in money or goods as well.

Villeins each held about thirty acres of land. In return they had to do three days' work each week on the lord's own land and extra work at harvest and other special times. Villeins also had to supply two oxen each for ploughing the lord's land. Eight oxen made up a full plough team, though people often used light ploughs drawn by two or four oxen.

Bordars only held about five acres

of land or even less. In return they worked for one day a week only on the lord's land. But they did other work as well. Some of them worked for the farmers who held more land. Others worked as swineherds, shepherds, blacksmiths, carpenters, or something of that kind.

People who had to work for the lord of the manor in return for their land, as the villeins and bordars did, were called serfs. Serfs belonged to the manor and could not leave it even if they wanted to.

"There are six ploughs," went on the Norman. "There is a mill, and there is a church. The wood feeds thirty-five pigs."

Edda had often helped the swineherd to drive the villagers' pigs into the forest in the autumn. The swineherd had told him that there were enough acorns and beech nuts in the wood to feed thirty-five pigs,

so the villagers were not allowed to send more than that into it. The wood belonged to the lord of the manor.

Just then Edda saw his father, whose name was Oswald, standing with the other villeins, so he ran up to him and pulled his sleeve.

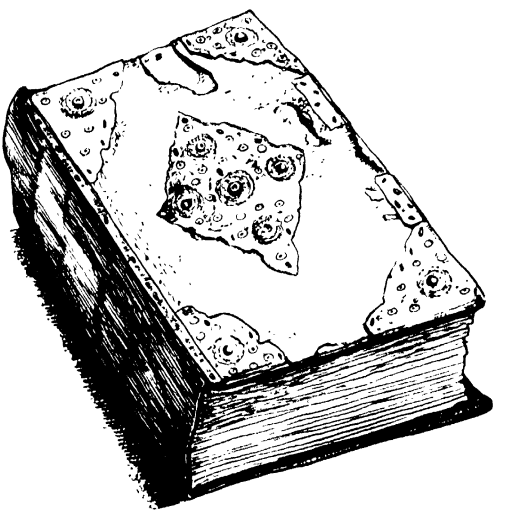
"Father, why do these men want to know all about us?" he asked.

Oswald frowned.

"'Tis being done all over England, by order of King William," he said. "We Saxons, and everything we have, belong to these Normans now. They are our masters. King William wishes to know just how much his new kingdom is worth, so that he may know how much the barons and knights can pay him in taxes."

Edda's father and the other Saxons were angry with William for finding out all about them and their country, and having it all written down. But

it is a good thing for us that he did, because the book he had made tells us a great many things about England in those far-off days that we should not have known without it. The book is called Domesday Book.



Domesday Book.

6

Oswald, a serf in Bennington, goes with his little boy, Edda, to gather wood. What the village looked like in early Norman times

"COME with me, Edda," said Oswald, one day, "and fetch wood from the forest. And we will visit the traps I set by the edge of the forest, and see if I have caught a rabbit."

There had not been any rabbits in England before the Norman Conquest. But after they settled in England, some of the Norman lords had rabbits sent over to them from Normandy. Some of Geoffrey's rabbits had escaped, and had made burrows for themselves at the edge of the forest, and now there were quite a lot of them.

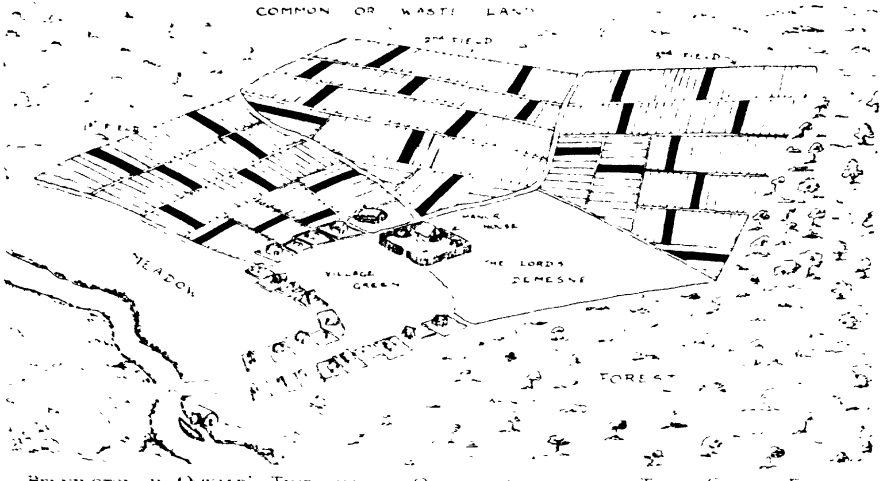
When Oswald and Edda got to the forest they gathered up all the

wood they could find that was lying on the ground, or that they could pull from the trees easily. Serfs were not allowed to cut or chop down wood without permission.

When they had enough wood, Oswald and Edda went to the edge of the forest to look at the traps. From here they could look down on the village. It did not look very like the English villages we can see to-day.

The homes of the villagers were low huts with thatched roofs, standing round a village green. Each hut had its own little garden. On one side of the village was a much bigger house, with a strong fence round it. It was the lord's great hall, or manor house.

In the yard outside the manor house a big, cooking-fire was burning, and Oswald and Edda could see Geoffrey's servants moving about near it preparing a meal.



BENNINGTON, IN OSWALD'S TIME, SHOWING OSWALD'S STRIPS IN THE THREE COMMON FIELDS

Behind the manor house was the lord's own land, called the demesne.

Not far from the manor house was the little wooden church.

A lane ran down from the village to the river. People had to wade across the river, because there was no bridge.

There were no small square fields with hedges all round them, such as we have to-day. Instead, there were three great big fields, just as there had been before the Normans came. Each field was divided into long, narrow strips, and each strip was just about one acre. An acre was as much land as a plough with a team of eight oxen could plough in one day. Every family living on the manor held so many strips, just as they had done in Saxon times. Oswald held thirty, ten in each field. But his strips were not together in one block. They were scattered about

all over the three big fields, as his neighbours' were, so that everyone had a share of the good land and of the bad land.

In one field wheat was growing; in another, beans. No one could grow just what he liked. Everyone had to grow the same crop as his neighbour. The third field was not growing anything. Each field rested every third year.

Near the river Edda could see a big green field with a fence round it. That was the meadow, and everyone who held land in the other fields had a piece of the meadow too, and had the hay from it.

Farther along the river was the water-mill, where the villagers took their corn to have it ground into flour.

Away beyond the three big fields there was wild open country. That was the waste, or common, where

the villagers could let their animals graze, and where they could gather bracken and berries and sticks.

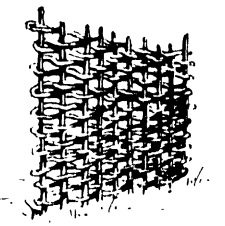
"Father," said Edda, "did Bennington look any different before the Normans came?"

"No—except that Sir Geoffrey has built a bigger hall," said Oswald, "and has put a strong fence round it. If he builds the hall and the church in stone, as he speaks of doing, then will the village look different."

"In stone!" exclaimed Edda.

All the houses Edda knew, including Sir Geoffrey's hall, were made of wood and wattle-and-daub. Wattle is made by weaving branches under and over each other, just as we weave a piece of cloth or darn a sock. Wattle is still used for fences. From the very earliest times the walls of houses were often made of wattle and then covered with clay

or mud. We call that wattle-and-daub.



A Wattle Hurdle.

Oswald found his traps had caught two rabbits. He and Edda picked up one each, took up their bundles of wood, and set off for home.

Suddenly there was the sound of a horn, and a number of men on horseback came riding out from the forest.

Oswald and Edda jumped off the path out of the way. Very quickly they threw the two rabbits in among some bushes.

Geoffrey, the lord of the manor, and some of his Norman friends and servants, went riding by. They had been hunting in the forest. The forest belonged to Geoffrey, and no one might hunt in it without his permission.

Geoffrey looked at Oswald and Edda as he passed, but as they seemed to have nothing but some bundles of wood, he did not say anything.

If he had seen the rabbits he would have been very angry.

"Shall I get the rabbits?" said Edda, when the Normans had passed.

"Nay," said Oswald. "I will come back for them after sunset."

7

The kind of house the serfs lived in in Norman times

OSWALD and Edda carried the bundles of wood back to the village.

Fires were burning outside most of the cottages, and a lovely smell came from the big iron cooking-pots

that hung over them. The cooking was usually done out of doors.

Oswald stopped at one spot to see how his neighbour, Egbert, was getting on. Egbert's hut had been burnt down, and he was busy building a new one. Some of his friends, and the village carpenter, were helping him.

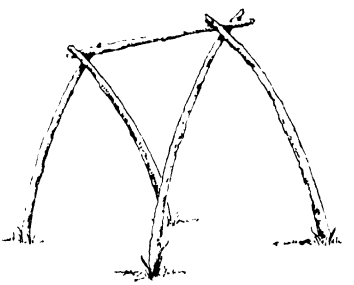
First they had cut down a bent tree, and split it right down the middle. Then they had set up the two halves of the tree to make a kind of archway, and joined them together at the top. About sixteen feet away they had set up another archway. Then they had put a straight tree from the top of one arch to the top of the other.

The arches were called crucks, and the tree along the top was called the ridge pole.

Next, with poles and branches, they had made the two sides of a

roof, which leant against the ridge pole. They had thatched it with straw, so that the rain would run off.

Now Egbert and his friends were filling up the two ends of the hut



The Framework of Egbert's new Hut.

with wattle, and leaving a space for a door.

"You've nearly finished, I see," cried Oswald.

"Yes, there's not much to do now," answered Egbert. "To-morrow I will fetch clay from the river bank and cover this wattle work, so that the wind and rain can't get in. And I

shall make a clay hearth for my fire to burn on in the middle of the hut. Then, when I have made a door, my new home will be ready."

Oswald and Edda went on down the street to their own house. It was rather like Egbert's, but bigger, because Oswald held much more land in the manor than Egbert did, so he had oxen and tools of his own.

The cattle stalls, where Oswald's oxen stood, were just inside the door. A passage between the cattle stalls led to the part of the house where Oswald and his wife and children lived.

In winter the fire burnt on a flat stone in the middle of the floor, and the smoke found its way out through a hole in the roof. But it floated about the room for a time before it got out, so everything was very black and sooty.

There was one little window. It

EGBERT'S HUT, NEARLY FINISHED.

had no glass in it, because glass was very difficult to get and cost a lot of money. Even the king had no glass in his windows in those days.

Oswald had made a wooden shutter, which he fastened over his window at night and in bad weather.

The floor of the hut was just earth. It got rather muddy in wet weather. In the daytime the door nearly always stood open, and the fowls and geese, and sometimes even

the pig, wandered in and out as they liked.

Edda and his little sister sat on stools and their mother, Bertha, gave them wooden bowls full of thick soup, made with peas and beans and onions, and some pieces of dark bread to eat. Then they had some cheese, and their father and mother drank some home-brewed ale.

By that time the sun had set, and it was time to get ready for bed. Everybody went to bed early in Bennington, and got up as soon as it was light, for there was plenty of work to do.

Bertha washed the wooden bowls and spoons and put them on a shelf, and the children packed the stools away in a corner. Then Oswald took some sacks of straw that were piled up against the wall and spread them out on the floor.

But just as they were going to lie

down they heard the sound of people running and shouting.

They all ran down to the fence.

"It's old Calmund's pig again," cried Edda.

Calmund was lazy and would not mend the fence round his garden, or look after his animals properly. His pig was always getting out. Then if it got into someone's garden it rooted up their onions and did a lot of harm.

The villagers were afraid it might get among the corn and trample it down. So they were trying to catch it. But the pig did not want to be caught. It dodged this way and that, and sometimes ran between someone's legs and made him fall over.

Oswald ran out to help. It was a long time before they could catch the pig. But at last they got it, and a villager who was called the pound-keeper shut it up in a little

fenced-in place that was called the pound.

It would be safe and comfortable there until the morning. Then Calmund would have to pay something before he could have it back.

"Perhaps that will teach him a lesson," said Oswald.

At last they could go to bed. They did not undress, but just lay down on their sacks of straw, with their heads resting on blocks of wood, and went to sleep.

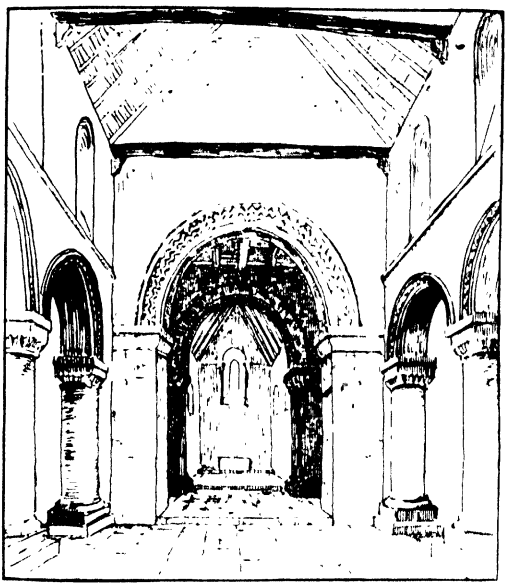
8

Sir Geoffrey, the Norman lord of the manor of Bennington, builds a new church of stone for the village

ONE day Oswald came home and told his wife and children that Sir Geoffrey was going to do what he had said he might do. He was going to have the little Saxon church pulled down, and in its place was going to have a bigger one built of stone.

Soon dozens of pack horses started coming into Bennington, all loaded with stone for the new church. Some Normans who knew all about building in stone, and who were called masons, came to live in Bennington. They were in charge of the work, but all the men of the village had to help.

Many of the children of Bennington had never seen a stone building before, so they were very interested. They



Inside Bennington's Norman Church

watched the masons at work whenever they could.

The walls of the church were made very thick. The tops of all the doors and windows were round. One of the masons was very clever at cutting

zigzag patterns in the stone, all round the tops of the doors. Edda wished he could do it too.

Inside the church there were two rows of short, thick columns that helped to hold up the roof.

It took a long time to build the church, but at last it was finished. The people were very proud of it. It was not really very big, but it was the finest building they had ever seen.

One day the Bishop came riding into Bennington. He had come to bless the new church. No one did any work in the fields that day. Everybody wanted to take part in the service.

The Bishop went all round the church, putting his hand on the wall in different places. And wherever his hand rested one of the masons cut a cross in the stone. The crosses were called consecration crosses. You can often find the consecration crosses

THE NORMAN CHURCH AT BENNINGTON.

in an old church if you look for them.

Edda and his sister liked going to the church every Sunday morning and on saints' days, although they could not understand the words of the service because these were in Latin.

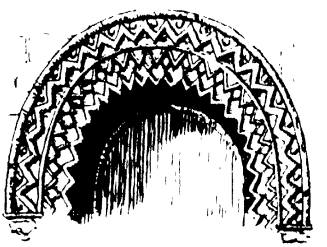
They had to stand or kneel on the hard stone floor because there were no seats in the church except a stone one all round by the wall, where people who were very old or ill could sit. The men stood on one side of the church and the women on the other.

The part of the church where the people stood was called the nave. The part where the altar was, and where the priest stood, was called the chancel.

The walls of the church were covered with pictures and patterns painted in bright colours. The pictures showed stories from the

Bible, or from the lives of the saints, especially St. Peter, because this church was called St. Peter's Church.

On the wall above the arch that divided the nave from the chancel



Norman Doorway showing Zigzag Decoration.

there was a picture of the Last Judgment. The children did not like that picture very much because it was rather frightening. It showed the souls of the people being judged by God on the last day, and some were being taken up to Heaven and some were being sent down to Hell.

Near the church was the house

the priest lived in, and near the house was a big barn. Everybody in the village had to give a tenth of everything he grew, and of his fowls and animals, to the church, and these tenths were stored in the barn until the priest wanted to use them. Tithe means tenth, so the barn was called the tithe barn.

9

A.D. 1180. Hubert, a descendant of Oswald, attends at the manor court

YEARS passed, and the Normans and the Saxons settled down together. The descendants of Oswald and the other serfs went on living in the cottages round the village green, and Geoffrey's descendants went on living in the manor house;

but in time they all came to think of themselves as English, and spoke a language they could all understand.

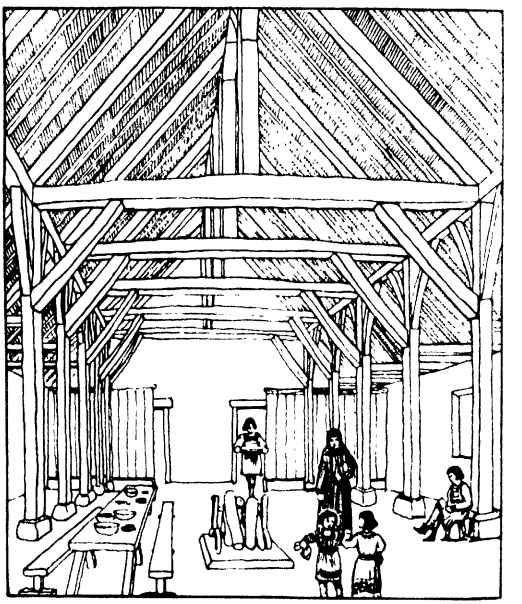
Every few weeks the serfs on all manors had to go to the manor house for a meeting, which was called the manor court.

All kinds of things were settled at the manor courts, and an account of everything that happened was written down. This account was called the manor roll.

One day, about a hundred years after Domesday Book was written, a descendant of Oswald named Hubert was living in Bennington. His father had just died and Hubert wanted to take over the land his father had held.

Next time there was a manor court at Bennington, Hubert went along to the manor house with the other serfs.

The manor house was like a big barn. The main door was at one



Inside Sir Nigel's Manor House.

end of one of the long walls, and there was another door facing it, in the other long wall. Inside each door there was a wooden screen. The screens helped to keep the draught from the doors away from the hall.

The floor was earth. Rushes had been spread over it. The fire was in the middle of the hall, and there was a hole in the roof over it for the smoke to go through.

At one end of the hall there was a platform (called the dais) raised a few inches from the floor of the hall. The lord of the manor, whose name now was Sir Nigel, was sitting on a chair on the dais with a table in front of him. His clerk sat beside him with a quill pen in his hand. He had the manor roll in front of him.

The beadle (who was a kind of policeman) called out that anyone who had business with the court should step forward.

A man named William stepped up. He said:

"My friend Roger be sick in bed, and cannot come to the court."

"See that he comes to the next court," said Sir Nigel.

If serfs stayed away from the manor court without a good reason, they were fined.

Then Sir Nigel asked a man who was called the reeve what business he had to put before the court. The reeve was one of the serfs, and the serfs themselves chose who should be reeve. He had to look after the manor and see that the land was ploughed and sown and reaped properly. He had to tell the serfs what work they were to do for the lord of the manor.

The reeve explained to Sir Nigel that Hubert's father had died and that Hubert wanted to take over his land.

"Do you know what you must do in return for the land?" Sir Nigel asked.

"Yes," said Hubert. "I must work for you for three days each

week and do extra work at haymaking time and harvest. And I must provide two oxen for ploughing."

Sir Nigel said that Hubert could have the land, and told him that he must pay a fee of 6s. 8d. Hubert agreed. Then Sir Nigel handed Hubert a white rod as a sign that he was letting him have the land. Then Hubert had to kneel and put his hands between Sir Nigel's hands, and promise to be true and faithful to him, and not to leave the manor. The clerk wrote all this down in the manor roll.

Hubert went back to his place. Then the reeve called out the names of people who had broken the laws of the manor.

There was John, who had chopped down a tree in the lord's wood. He said that at the last court he had been ordered to repair his house, and that was why he had wanted the tree.

He was fined twopence for taking the tree without permission.

Three other men were fined twopence each because they had come late to their work on the lord's land, or had done the work badly. One was fined sixpence because he had attacked the reeve. Another man was fined for hunting in the lord's woods, and another for letting his pig run about without a ring through its nose.

A man named Stephen was ordered to mend the fence round his garden, as his animals were always getting out. If it was not mended by next court he would be fined.

Then a man asked permission for his daughter to marry, and paid a sum of money.

The beadle collected the money from the men who had been fined. Some of them grumbled very much. Twopence was quite a lot of money in those days.

Hubert's 6s. 8d. was a very large sum, and Hubert felt very poor after he had paid it. But now he was safe, because no one could take his land away from him, so long as he did his work for the lord of the manor at the right times.

10

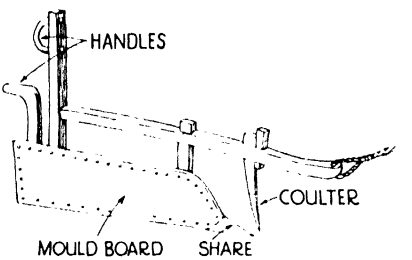
Work on the Manor

HUBERT had three children. The two boys were called Walter and Gurth, and the girl was called Alice.

They did not go to school, or learn to read and write and do sums. But almost as soon as they could walk and talk they started to help their father and mother.

In the spring Hubert had to plough his strips of land and he had to do so

many days ploughing on the lord's land as well. The plough was made of two heavy beams of wood fastened one above the other. At the front end of the lower beam was a curved



The Plough.

and pointed piece of iron which was called the share. In front of the share was another piece of iron sharpened like a knife. It was called the coulter. When the oxen dragged the plough along, the coulter made a cut in the ground. Then the share followed and dug the earth away and turned it over to one side in a long furrow.

At the back of the plough were

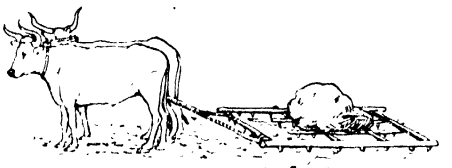
HUBERT GUIDES THE PLOUGH AND WALTER HELPS TO DRIVE THE OXEN

the two handles which Hubert held to guide the plough.

Walter went with Hubert when he went ploughing. He was not strong enough to guide the plough, but he carried a stick and helped to make the oxen go.

When the ground was ready the seed had to be sown. Hubert walked up and down his strips of land with the seed in a basket, or in an apron tied round his waist. He threw the seed out in handfuls over the ground. The children ran about shouting to frighten the birds away so that they would not eat the seeds.

Then the oxen dragged a harrow slowly over the field. The harrow



HUBERT'S OXEN DRAGGING THE HARROW OVER THE GROUND.

was made of thick oak bars crossing one another. Underneath each bar were wooden teeth. The teeth broke up the big clods of earth and covered up the seed.

While the seed was growing all the children of the village were kept busy frightening the birds away and cutting down the thistles and other weeds.

When the wheat, rye or barley was ready, Hubert and the other villagers took their sickles and cut it down. None of Hubert's children were old enough to use the sickle and cut the corn. But they helped their mother to tie the corn up into bundles, which are called sheaves.

Then they stood the sheaves up on end, in little groups, to dry in the sun. Afterwards they were taken home in a cart.

HUBERT MOWING.

Hubert and the other serfs had to cut and cart the lord of the manor's corn. Later on the corn had to be threshed to make the grains fall out. The lord's corn was threshed in his great barn, but Hubert and his friends threshed theirs on a piece of flat, dry ground in the open. First, Hubert made a flail. He took two pieces of wood and fastened them together, end to end, with a piece of leather. He held one of the pieces of wood and swung the other one up and then down on to the ears of corn.

After the corn had been threshed the children helped to toss the grain up and down so that the wind would

blow the chaff and dust and pieces of straw away. Then the grain was ready to be ground into flour.

In the summer the hay had to be cut from Hubert's part of the meadow. All the family helped. The long grass was cut with a scythe and then tossed about until it was quite dry. Then it was carried home and stored for the winter.

HUBERT THRESHING HIS CORN WITH A FLAIL.

The children helped to feed and look after Hubert's oxen and pig, and learned to milk the cow when they had one. There was always work to be done in the garden, too, where Hubert grew cabbages and leeks and onions. Nobody knew anything about potatoes in those days.

Hubert had some apple trees in the garden, and some beehives. There was

no sugar, so if Hubert's wife wanted to make anything sweet she used honey.

The children had to fetch water from the river, and wood from the waste or from the forest. They did not stray far into the forest, because there were wolves and other wild beasts about that are not seen in Britain now.

Hubert had to kill the pig and some of the cattle in the autumn. Then his wife salted the meat down so that it would keep, and taught Alice how to do it.

The family ate the salt meat during the winter. It was cooked with peas and beans and onions in the iron cooking pot that hung over the fire. Alice and her mother made loaves of rye, wheat, barley or oats and cooked them on the hot stone hearth.

They had porridge to eat, too, and eggs from Hubert's hens, and sometimes a fowl or a goose.

II

Hand-mills and Water-mills

ONE evening one of Hubert's neighbours ran up to him.

"Hubert," he cried, "have you heard what has happened to our neighbour, William? Sir Nigel's bailiff caught him grinding his corn at home, and the matter will be brought up against him at the next manor court."

Sir Nigel had other manors besides Bennington, and the bailiff was the man who looked after them all for him. Sometimes he was at one and sometimes at another. Just now he was at Bennington.

Hubert looked worried. The water-mill down by the river belonged to the lord of the manor, and all the serfs had to have their corn

ground there. The miller kept back some of the corn in payment. The villagers believed that the miller cheated them by keeping back too much of their corn, so sometimes they tried to grind the corn at home with hand-mills. If they were caught they were fined, and the hand-mills were taken away.

Thousands of years ago, when people first started making grain into flour, they put the grain on a flat stone and hammered it with another stone. Later on they learnt to put it into a stone bowl and grind it by pushing another stone round and round over it.

Another way was to put the grain on a stone that was higher at one end than the other. It was something like a horse's saddle, so we call it a saddle-stone. A woman knelt behind the saddle-stone, at the high end, put the grain on it, and rubbed

another long, flat stone up and down over the grain.

Hubert's hand-mill was easier to use than either of these. It was called a quern. There were two

A Saddle stone.

Hubert's Hand mill or Quern.

Section of the Quern.

round stones like wheels. The bottom one had a spike sticking up in the centre, called a spindle. The top stone fitted over the bottom one, and had a hole in the middle, which went over the spindle.

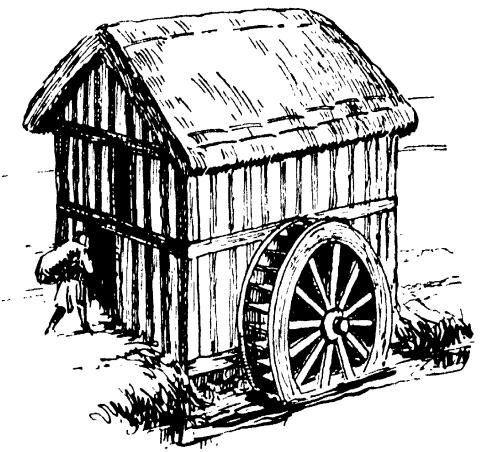
The top stone had a handle. The grain was put into the hole in the top stone, and the top stone was then pushed round and round over the lower one. The grain was crushed between them and the flour fell out round the edges.

After hearing about William, Hubert decided that he would not risk grinding his corn at home. So he hid his hand-mill under a heap of straw and hoped the bailiff would not find it.

Next day Hubert and Walter and Gurth carried their sacks of grain to the water-mill.

Inside the mill-house there were two big mill-stones. The miller poured the grain into a hole in the top one, and it was ground between the two stones just as it was in Hubert's quern. But no one had to turn the upper stone by hand. That was done by the water from the mill-stream outside, which fell on the blades of a big wheel and made it turn round. That made other wheels inside the mill go round, and they in turn made the mill-stone go round.

"Someone was very clever to think



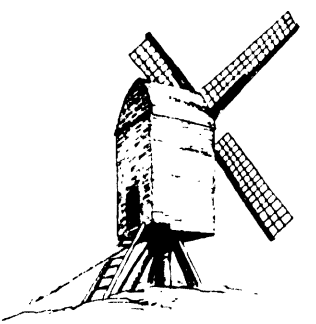
THE WATER MILL.

of making the water do the work and turn the mill-stone," said Gurth.

"Yes, I wonder who it was," said Walter. "I'm glad we didn't have to grind our corn at home with the hand-mill. It's such hard work."

No one in England at that time had thought of making the wind turn

the mill-stone. So Hubert and the children did not know that a few years later there would be a wind-mill up on the hill above the village, as well as a water-mill down by the river.



The Wind mill.

12

The serfs of Bennington mow the lord of the manor's meadow, and he gives them a feast

ONE June evening Hubert said: "I think to-morrow will be fine and hot, so I will start cutting the grass in my part of the meadow."

But just then the beadle came by and called out that all the serfs were to work in the lord of the manor's meadow next day. So Hubert knew that his own hay would have to wait.

Very early next morning Hubert and the three children got up, had some breakfast, and walked to Sir Nigel's big meadow. For this special work all the family had to help, except the housewife.

When they got to the meadow, the reeve told them where they were to work. Then Hubert and the other

men took their scythes and started to cut the long grass. The women and children tossed the grass about and turned it over so that the wind and sun would dry it.

The reeve walked up and down the field with a rod in his hand. He had to see that everybody was working properly.

Every now and then an old woman came over to Hubert's part of the field with a big jug of ale. Her name was Agatha. She was too old to work in the fields, and had no husband or son to work for her. So Sir Nigel let her live in a tiny cottage, and in return she had to carry ale from the manor house to the workers at haymaking and harvest time.

At noon the reeve blew his horn, and everybody stopped work. Then servants came from the manor house with cheese and loaves and some

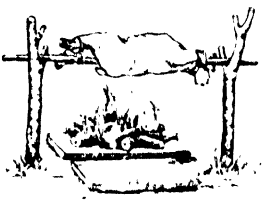
more ale and the serfs all had their dinner and a rest.

They went on working all the afternoon. When the reeve's horn blew at last, they were all very glad to stop work.

Hubert and the children hurried out of the meadow, chattering and laughing with their friends, for now the lord of the manor was going to give them a fine feast. The special work that was done at hay time and harvest was called boon-work, and the feast at the end of the day was called a boon-feast.

They made their way to the manor house. In the courtyard several fires were burning, and big cooking-pots were hanging over some of them. Near others big joints of meat were roasting. A long rod called a spit was pushed through each joint. The ends of the spit rested on supports near the fire. A little boy had to

keep turning the spit, so that the meat would roast evenly.



Meat Roasting on a Spit.

The serfs were given plenty of thick soup and bread and some more ale to drink. Then they were given the roast meat. They liked that best, because they did not have it very often in their own homes.

The people cut off pieces of the meat with their own knives and ate them with their fingers. There were no forks. The plates were wooden, and two people shared one, and a wooden mug, too. The bones were thrown down on the floor for the dogs.

By the time the meal was finished the children were nearly asleep. Everybody was tired after the long day in the sun.

The serfs had to do two more days' work in the lord's meadow before all the hay was cut and carted into the lord's barn.

As the last load was carried away the reeve drove one of Sir Nigel's sheep in through the gate. All the serfs kept very still and quiet so as not to frighten it. For if it stayed in the meadow and began to eat the serfs could have it for a feast. But if it ran out through the gate, they could not have it.

The sheep ran up and down for a minute. Then it began to eat. Gurth and Walter and the other children clapped their hands.

There was still one thing more to do. The reeve was standing by a great heap of hay. All the serfs gathered round. The reeve signed to a man named Richard to begin. He went up to the hay and gathered a mass of it together and tied it in

a bundle. Then he put the handle of his scythe under the bundle and lifted it up very carefully.

Everybody laughed and cheered. Richard had the bundle of hay for his own.

The next man to try was greedy. He made too big a bundle of hay. When he tried to lift it, the handle of his scythe broke. The other serfs jeered, and he went away with a red face and no hay at all.

One by one all the men had a turn. Hubert got quite a nice big bundle. Some of the others could not lift their hay without letting the handle of the scythe touch the ground. Then they were not allowed to have it.

13

Holidays on the Manor

THE people of Bennington did not work hard all the time.

There were a great many saints' days, when people did only the work that must be done—such as feeding the animals, or getting the harvest in when it was ready and the weather was fine. The saints' days were called holy days, and we still call a day when we do not go to work or to school a holiday.

On Sundays and holy days people went to services in the church. Afterwards they met on the village green and danced or played games or ran races.

Walter and Gurth and the other children were always glad when they saw that a platform was being put

up on the village green, or in the church-yard. Then they knew that a play was going to be acted. The play was nearly always a story from the Bible; but parts of it were often very funny.

The holiday at Christmas time lasted for twelve days. Before Christmas people fetched holly and ivy from the woods and decorated their houses and churches just as we do.

Often there was a Christmas feast in the manor hall. A huge log-fire burnt on the hearth in the middle of the hall. The lord of the manor and his family sat at a table on the dais. There was a chair for the lord, but other people sat on stools or benches. Long tables were set up in the hall for the serfs and servants. The tables were all boards that rested on wooden stands called trestles.

When the feast was over the tables were taken down, and everyone played

games or sang or danced or listened to someone telling stories. Then the villagers all went home, and most of the people who lived in the manor house settled down to sleep in the same great hall in which they lived and had their meals. In some halls there was a room at the dais-end of the hall, called the bower, in which the lord of the manor and his family slept, and where the women could be in the day time if they liked.

A day that Walter and Gurth and Alice always looked forward to was May day. It was not a saint's day, but the day on which people showed how glad they were that the winter was over.

On 1st May Hubert woke the children very early, before it was light. They led their two oxen out into the street. There they joined their neighbours, and they all trooped off to the woods. As the sun rose they picked big bunches of wild

A May pole Dance.

flowers, and broke off branches of flowering hawthorn and of green leaves.

Some of the men cut down a tree, and the women and girls decorated it with flowers and ribbons and strips of coloured cloth. Then they tied bunches of flowers to the horns of the oxen, and the oxen dragged the tree back to the village. The people followed it, dancing and singing and waving their branches.

Alice and the other girls made wreaths of flowers and put them round their heads.

They set the tree up on the village green. It was called a May-pole. For the rest of the day the people danced round the May-pole, and played games. The men had wrestling matches, and practised shooting with bows and arrows.

The children were very tired when at last they all went home to bed.

14

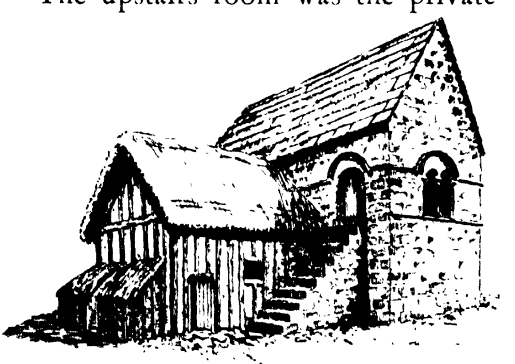
Sir Nigel, a descendant of Geoffrey, the first Norman lord of the manor of Bennington, and the kind of life he and his children, Stephen and Catherine, were living about the year 1180

THE house the first Norman lord, Sir Geoffrey, had built soon after the Norman Conquest, had only the one big hall, where everybody lived and ate their meals and slept. But Geoffrey soon had two little rooms built out at the lower end of the hall, where the doors and the screens were. One was called the pantry. It was where the food was kept. The other was called the buttery, and was the room in which the home-brewed ales and the wines were kept.

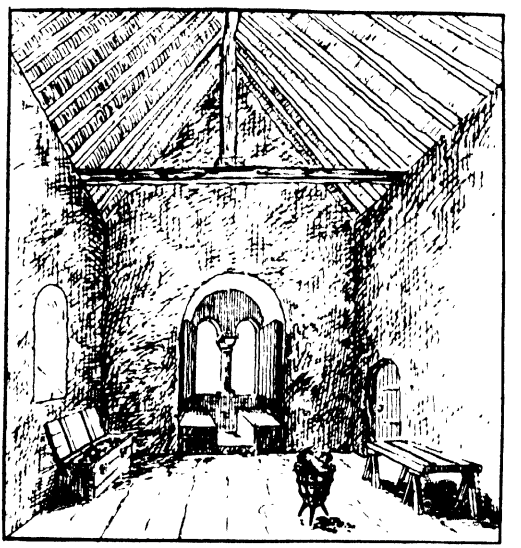
Later on he had a room built on to the other end of the hall, where the dais was, for himself and his family.

When Sir Nigel was lord of the manor he decided to make the manor house bigger and finer. So he had a two-storey building put across the hall at the dais-end, and he had it built of stone, like the church. There was only one door into the lower room, and that was behind Sir Nigel's chair on the dais. The room had no windows, and it was where Sir Nigel kept weapons and valuable things.

The upstairs room was the private



SIR NIGEL'S MANOR HOUSE IN 1180.



Inside the Upper Room in Sir Nigel's Manor House

room for Sir Nigel and his family. To get to it they had to go out of the hall and up a flight of stone stairs outside. The room had big windows, with shutters for keeping out the wind and rain. Glass still cost so much money that hardly anyone

could have it. There was a tiny window, too, through which Sir Nigel and his wife, Eleanor, could look down into the hall and see that everything was all right.

Sir Nigel had two children called Stephen and Catherine. They had toys to play with, such as you have. They had balls made of leather or cloth, and a wooden horse. Catherine had a wooden doll she was very fond of, and another made of rag. Stephen had some little wooden soldiers, and some toy swords and lances and a toy bow and arrow.

After supper in the great hall they and some of the grown-up people played games like blind-man's buff, or bob-apple. Sometimes they listened to a minstrel who played on a harp and sang to them. Or a traveller might be there who would tell them wonderful stories.

They both learned to ride very

A Horse Litter.

early. Riding on horseback, or walking, was the only way of getting about, unless people were very old or ill. Then they were carried in a kind of hammock slung between two horses. It was called a litter.

When Stephen was about eight years old his father told him that he was to go away and live in the castle of the baron, John de Tournville. That was the way in which boys like Stephen, who were going to be knights when they grew up, were taught in those days. They did not go to school, and they did not work in the fields as the children of the serfs did.

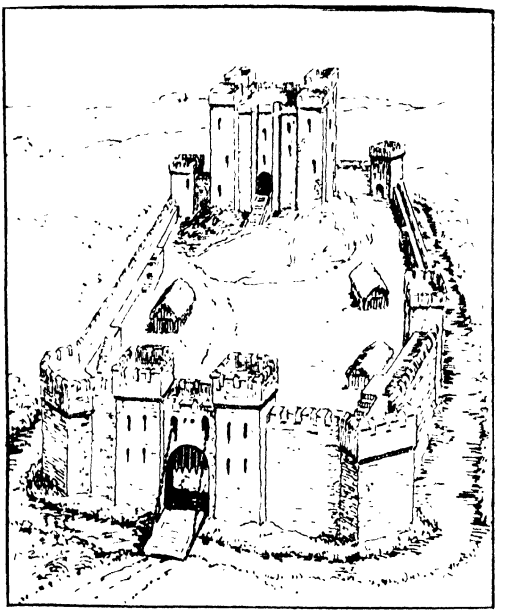
Stephen was sad at leaving his mother and sister, but excited about the journey. He started off early one morning on horseback, with his father. They rode all day, over wild strange country. Early in the evening they came to a village, and to a

manor house that was rather like their own.

The lord of the manor welcomed Stephen and his father, and one or two other travellers who had arrived, and gave them a good meal in his hall and beds for the night.

Next day Sir Nigel and Stephen rode on, and that evening they came to the castle where Stephen was going to live. It had a wide ditch all round it full of water, which was called a moat. There was a bridge across the moat, that could be pulled up at night or in time of danger. When the drawbridge was up and the thick strong doors were shut, the people in the castle felt quite safe.

Stephen and his father rode across the bridge and in through the gate in the strong walls. They found themselves in a big courtyard. At the other end of the courtyard there was a strong stone building on the top



The Castle.

of a little hill. It was called the keep.

There was a flight of steps leading up to a door high up in the wall of the keep. Stephen and his father were taken up the steps into a big

hall where there were a number of men who lived in the castle, so that they could defend it if anyone attacked it.

In one corner of the keep there was a tower in which a spiral stair wound round and round a central post. Stephen and his father followed their guide up the stair. It was very dark and steep.

On the next floor they came to the great hall of the castle. It was like other great halls that Stephen knew, except that it was of stone. There was another room above it, so the fire could not be in the middle of the hall, with a hole above it for the smoke to go through. A fireplace had been made in one of the thick walls, and the smoke escaped through slits in the wall.

Here Stephen was presented to the baron and his lady.

Next day Sir Nigel rode away and left Stephen behind.

15

Stephen's life at the castle, and how he became a page, then a squire, and, finally, a knight

STEPHEN found it very strange at the castle at first, but he soon got used to it.

There were several other boys there, learning to serve the baron as pages, but Stephen was the youngest. They were all looked after and taught by a man named Roger.

Roger taught them how to shoot straight with a bow and arrow, and how to fight with a sword and a lance. They learnt how to look after horses as well as how to ride them. And they learnt how to take care of the armour that knights wore at that time, and how to put it on and take it off.

The pages had to learn good manners, and how to wait on the

baron and his lady. Stephen was taught that he must bow when he answered them, and go down on one knee when he handed them anything. He learnt that he must not sit down until the baron or his lady said that he might.

He learnt, too, how to lay the baron's table for a meal. Before the meal began he and the other pages brought in bowls of water and towels and held them so that the baron and his guests could wash their hands. Then, when the dishes were brought from the kitchen, the pages who were big enough carried them up the long hall to some older boys, called squires, who had to carve them.

Stephen also learnt to sing and to play instruments like the lute and the harp, and to dance.

When Stephen was fourteen he became a squire himself. There was a service in the castle chapel, and

A KNIGHT FOLLOWED BY HIS SQUIRE.

Stephen had a belt fastened round his waist from which a sword hung.

After that he had more important things to do. He had to go on

journeys with the baron, and look after his horse and armour, and sometimes carry his shield and banner. Sometimes the baron had to go to the king's palace, and then Stephen had to learn how to behave at Court.

The baron was very fond of hunting, and Stephen and the other squires often went with him.

Sometimes there were tournaments, when the knights in their armour and carrying their lances rode at each other and tried to prove which was the best and bravest fighter. The squires went with them to wait on them. And the squires themselves had tournaments and exercises so that they could learn to be great fighters when they were men.

When Stephen was about seventeen a great many Christian knights and barons went away to Palestine to fight. The Holy City of Jerusalem had been taken by the Turks. The

Turks were not Christians. They followed a religion founded by a prophet named Mohammed. They did not like the Christians to visit the Holy places in Palestine where Jesus had lived and died.

So a great many Christian kings, barons and knights from countries all over Europe tried to drive the Turks out of Palestine. They took the Cross of Christ as their badge, so the wars they fought are called the Crusades, from a Latin word that means "a cross."

King Richard I of England went to the Crusades, and Stephen's master, John de Tournville, went also. He took Stephen and another squire with him.

They were away for four years, and by the time Stephen came back to the manor house at Bennington he was quite grown up, and had been made a knight himself.

16

Stephen's sister, Catherine, and the kind of life she lived in Bennington manor house, and the things she had to learn

STEPHEN'S sister, Catherine, missed him very much when he went away. But she had a great deal to learn, too.

First, she had to learn how to spin. Every lady in those days, even the Queen, spent a lot of time spinning. Catherine learnt to carry a rod, which was called a distaff, under her left arm, or tucked into her belt. On the end of the rod a bundle of wool was fastened. She pulled some wool from the bundle and fixed it to a short rod, called a spindle, which she twisted. As the spindle spun round it twisted the wool into a thread. When the thread got rather long, the spinner wound it round the

CATHERINE'S MOTHER SPINNING.

spindle and fastened it in a little notch while she made some more thread.

Sometimes flax was used instead of wool. Then a linen thread was made.

When there was enough thread, it had to be woven into cloth. That was done on a big frame called a loom, and was another thing Catherine's mother, Eleanor, taught her how to do. Then the cloth had to be made into clothes or rugs.

Catherine had to learn how the food was cooked, and how the home-made ale was brewed, and how the bread was baked. For the lady of the house had to see that there was enough food and clothing for

everybody, and for any visitors who might come. There were no shops, so nearly everything that was used had to be grown or made at home.

A few things, such as pepper and ginger and other spices for flavouring, came over the sea from foreign lands. So Eleanor had to buy them from merchants who lived in a town a long day's journey from Bennington, called Hartbridge. Hartbridge was by a wide river, so ships could sail right up to it from the sea.

Salt was another thing that the people of Bennington could not make for themselves. They wanted it because there was not enough hay to keep all the animals alive right through the winter, so most of them had to be killed in the autumn, and the meat salted down for food.

People who lived by the sea filled large iron pans with sea water, and put a fire under the pans. Slowly

the water dried up and the salt sank to the bottom of the pans and was raked out.

Catherine's mother had to see that the salt and the spices, and anything else she wanted, were ordered in good time in the spring. They had

THE SALT AND THE SPICES WERE LOADED ON PACK-HORSES.

to be sent during the summer, loaded on the backs of pack-horses. There were no good roads, but only rough tracks, and in the winter these were often knee-deep in mud and water, or blocked with snow. Sometimes nobody could get to Bennington for weeks at a time in the winter.

There were no doctors to send for when anybody was ill, so people did what they could for each other. Catherine's mother made all kinds of medicines from herbs, and she taught Catherine to do the same.

One day Catherine's father, Sir Nigel, told her he had arranged for her to be married. A little boy Catherine had never seen before came with his parents and there was a service in the church at which he and Catherine promised they would marry when they were old enough. It was called a betrothal ceremony. Then the boy went back to his home.

When Catherine was about ten years old she, like Stephen, went to live in a castle, where she learnt how to wait on a great lady and how to behave at Court. Like Stephen, she learnt how to dance and sing and play musical instruments. She learnt how to do beautiful embroidery and needlework, too. Sometimes she went with the other ladies to tournaments to watch the knights and squires at their exercises.

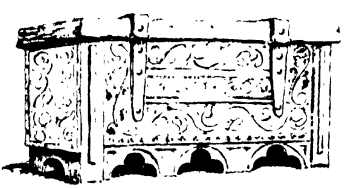
Three years later Catherine rode home for her wedding. After the service there were feasting and dancing and bonfires for several days.

Then Catherine's clothes and anything she wanted to take with her were packed into a long, heavy, wooden box, which was called a dower chest. It was loaded on to a rough cart. Then Catherine and her new husband and his relations and their servants mounted their horses,

CATHERINE LEAVING HOME AFTER HER WEDDING.

and Catherine said good-bye to her father and mother, and to Stephen, too, who had come home for the wedding, and rode away to her new home.

She would live with her husband's family until, in time, he became the lord of his father's manor, and she the lady of the manor, as her mother had been at Bennington.



CATHERINE'S DOWER CHEST.

17

John, the grandson of Walter, goes from Bennington to the grammar school in the near-by town of Stanway

ABOUT five miles from Bennington there was a small town called Stanway.

Every Friday a market was held in the square in the middle of the town. If people from Bennington, or from any of the other villages round about, had something they wanted to sell, they took it to the market. People who wanted to buy came and looked at the goods and chose what they wanted.

Walter, the son of Hubert—the serf whom you read about earlier—liked going to the market and meeting people from other villages and hearing their news. When Walter was grown up he married a

girl from the town, named Mary. When his father, Hubert, died, Walter took over his land and he and Mary lived in the cottage in Bennington that had been Hubert's.

Walter and Mary's eldest child was a boy called John. He was a quiet boy who liked spending his time around the village church and talking to the priest. The priest let John help him sometimes, and taught him the Latin words of the services, and to read and write a little.

"Oh, if only I could be a priest myself when I grow up," said John one day.

"First, you would have to go to school," answered the priest.

John begged his mother and father to let him go to the grammar school in Stanway. At last they agreed, and at the next manor court Walter asked the lord's permission for John to go to school, and the lord gave his

THE SCHOOL-ROOM AT STANWAY.

consent. Walter paid the lord a fee, and John went to live with one of his uncles in Stanway.

The school belonged to a big church in Stanway, and one of the priests was the schoolmaster. There was only the one master, and all the boys were taught together in one room.

John had to be in school by six o'clock every morning. He did not mind that, as he was used to getting up early. At nine o'clock came prayers, and a quarter of an hour for breakfast. Then there was school again until eleven, when the boys went home for dinner. Afternoon school was from one o'clock until five.

John did not do the same lessons as you do in school. He learnt to read, write and speak Latin. He found it very hard, and the schoolmaster was very strict and caned the

boys a great deal if they could not do their work. They were not allowed to speak anything but Latin in school.

John had to go to school every day except on Holy Days and at Christmas and Easter. On Sundays lessons ended at dinner-time.

There was no play-ground, such as you have, and there were no school games like cricket or netball. But when they were not in school the boys played games something like hockey and football among themselves.

On Shrove Tuesday the boys were allowed to take cocks to school and they spent the morning watching the cocks fight. In the afternoon they joined a great many other men and boys of the town and played football, but not in a field. They played up and down the streets of the town. It was a very rough game and people often got hurt.

At harvest time the school was closed for several weeks so that the boys could help to get the harvest in from the fields just outside the town. Everybody in the town had to help. The weaver left his loom, the blacksmith left his forge, and off they all trooped to the fields.

John went home to Bennington to help his own family with the harvest.

How glad they were to see him, and how proud Walter and Mary were of their schoolboy son. He had to tell all the other boys and girls what it was like to be at school.

When John told them that the older boys had to show how much they had learnt, and how clever they were, by arguing with each other in Latin, while grown up people and the other boys listened, most of them said they would rather stay in Bennington and work in the fields.

When John grew up he did be-

come a priest. Then he was not a serf any longer.

When Walter died, his second son, Henry, John's brother, took over Walter's land.

18

A.D. 1270. Robert, a serf living in Bennington, builds himself a new house, on a separate piece of land, away from the village

YOU remember that the land held by the serfs in Bennington was in one-acre strips scattered all over three great fields, don't you?

Gradually some of the serfs managed to exchange strips with each other, so that some of them got strips that were side by side and made one big piece of land.

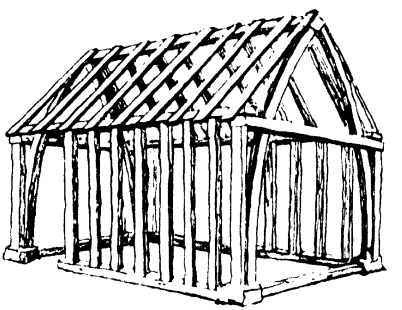
Robert, one of Walter's descendants, was one of the farmers who

did this. Then he decided that he would get the carpenter to build him a new house on the corner of his piece of land so that he would not have to walk all the way from the village every day.

First he had to get permission from the lord of the manor to build the new house. Then the carpenter prepared the wood in his yard. He nailed it together there, too, and when the framework was ready it was hauled along to Robert's piece of land. Then all the men in the village were called in to help to raise it up. It was not a house yet, because there were spaces about nine inches wide between each of the upright timbers that made the walls.

When the framework was fixed firmly in position a man came and filled in the panels with wattle—branches woven under and over each other, you remember. The daubers

came next and spread wet clay on top of the wattle inside and out, and a plasterer came and put plaster on top of the clay. They left part of one panel open for a window, and the carpenter made a shutter to go over it.



The Framework of Robert's New House.

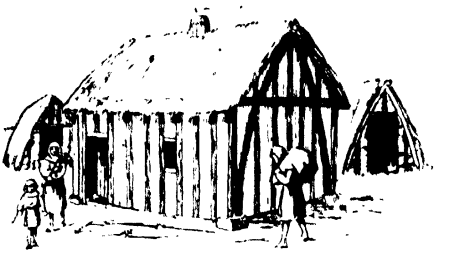
Robert himself, and his family, helped with all this work. Next the thatcher came and thatched the roof. Robert had managed to get hold of a beautiful barrel. He knocked the two ends out and the barrel was put over a hole in the middle of the roof to serve as a chimney.

Robert's new house was rather like the hall of the manor house, only much smaller. It was just one room, with the door at one end of one of the long walls, and with one little window-opening with no glass in it. The fire burnt on a hearth on the floor in the middle, under the hole in the thatched roof.

There was a yard outside Robert's house, and in the yard he built some sheds for the animals, so that they need not share the house with him and his family.

When the house was finished Robert gave a feast to all his friends in the village who had helped him to build it.

Robert was better off now that his land was in one block. He need not walk so far to get from one part of his land to another. And he was able to put a fence round his block of land, and grow what he liked on



ROBERT'S HOUSE AND SHEDS.

it, instead of having to do exactly what his neighbours did.

Robert, his wife Cicely, and their children, and his brother Reginald all settled down in the new house. They lived and worked and slept in the one room, and they had the same kind of furniture as they had before—just a board on trestles for a table, stools to sit on, and sacks of straw for beds. They spread straw on the earthen floor for warmth, and cleared it out when it got very dirty.

During the winter evenings Robert and Reginald carved bowls, spoons,

ladles and plates out of spare pieces of beech or oak, and made leather bottles, and wooden stools. Cicely spun and wove wool or hemp into cloth to make clothes and blankets for them all.

After a time Reginald got leave from the lord of the manor to take a few acres of land on the edge of the waste, a long way from the village, and pay a rent every year for it. He built a rough little hut on the land. Then he married and lived there with his wife. In time he put a fence round his little piece of land. He, too, could grow what he liked.

One or two other men did as Reginald had done. So in time there were several little fenced-in blocks of land to be seen round Bennington, as well as the three great fields divided up into strips.

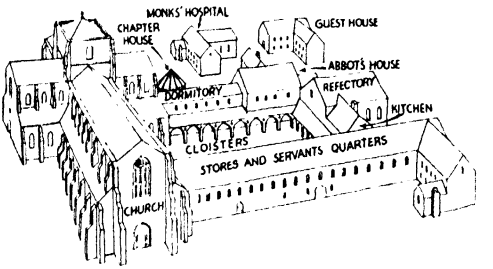
19

The Monastery near Bennington, and what it was like to be a monk

YOU remember that in Saxon times some monks built themselves a monastery near Bennington, don't you?

The first house the monks built for themselves was of wood and wattle-and-daub, like the other Saxon houses. But as time passed the monasteries became very rich. They owned a great deal of land, and often the Abbot was the lord of several manors. Monks everywhere built themselves big beautiful churches, and fine stone buildings to live in. They could not do all the work that was needed, so they had a large number of servants to help them.

By the time Robert and his family



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE MONASTERY.

were living in Bennington, the monastery near-by was a group of big, fine buildings of stone, with a high wall round them.

Robert's little boy, Simon, often wondered what it was like to be a monk. One day he met a boy who worked at the monastery.

"Are you going to be a monk some day?" Simon asked.

"Nay, not I," answered the boy.

"What is it like, being a monk?" Simon asked. "What do they do?"

"Well," said the other boy, "they spend a lot of time in their big,

beautiful church. A bell rings at daybreak and they wash their hands and go into church for the first service. Then they go to the Chapter House—that's a big round room—and talk business, and the Abbot tells them what work there is to be done, and who is to do it. There's another service in the middle of the morning. Then they go into the refectory—that's the room where they have their meals—for dinner."

"Haven't they had anything to eat before that?" asked Simon.

"No, dinner is the first meal. In the middle of the afternoon there's another service, and another before supper, and another at sunset. Then they go to bed—but the bell rings again at midnight and down they all come for another service."

"I shouldn't like that," said Simon. "What do they do in between the church services?"

"Some of them read and study in the cloisters."

"What are the cloisters?" asked Simon.

"Well—there's a square, grassy place called the cloister garth. All round it there are passages, open on the side facing the garth. The passages are called the cloisters. Some of the monks spend all their time copying books. The monastery has ever so many books. Some monks paint beautiful little pictures in the books, and some of them paint big pictures on the walls of the monastery, or on pieces of wood."

"They also give food and a bed for the night to travellers, don't they?" said Simon.

"Yes," agreed the other boy. "There are always visitors at the monastery, and some of the monks have to look after them. Sometimes there are boys being taught, too. I

shouldn't like to be one of them. They are not allowed to have any fun. One monk has charge of two boys, and he stays with them almost all the time. He teaches them in the cloisters."

A Monk Writing in a Book.

"Do the monks stay in the monastery all the time?" asked Simon.

"Oh yes, most of them do. Sometimes the Abbot sends one of them on a journey. And some of them have to go out to look after the land that belongs to the monastery. But most of them stay here. They are not even allowed to talk to each other very much."

"I don't think I should like to be a monk," said Simon, shaking his head.

20

A.D. 1275. Robert and his boy, Simon, go on a journey from Bennington to Hartbridge

YOU remember, don't you, that a market was held every Friday at Stanway, the little town not far from Bennington. The villagers could go there to sell anything they had to spare, and to buy things they could not make for themselves.

In many big towns a very much bigger market, called a "Fair," was held once a year, as well as the little weekly market. There was a Fair every September at Hartbridge. It lasted for three weeks, and merchants and pedlars came to it from all over the country, and from foreign lands across the sea.

One day Sir Edward, who was then the lord of the manor of Bennington, sent for Robert.

"Robert," he said, "I wish you to go to Hartbridge. Many months ago, in London, I arranged with a Venetian merchant that he would bring me some silk cloth from Venice when next he came to England, which would be at the time of Hartbridge Fair. My scribe has written a letter for the merchant. Find him and give him the letter and he will give you the silk. You are an honest and a careful man, and I trust you to bring it to me safely."

Robert decided to take Simon to Hartbridge with him. Simon was delighted. They started off very early one morning, because it would take them all day to get there.

They waded across the river and followed a rough track on the other side. They nearly lost their way, as there were no signposts. At last they were able to join some other travellers who were going to the

Fair, some walking and some on horseback. People liked to travel together in parties, because robbers might attack them if they travelled alone.

The road was very bad. There were deep holes in it, and sometimes the holes were full of rain water. On some manors the lord of the manor had made the serfs fill the holes in with big stones. Then the track was very rough, and was hard to walk or ride on.

The best roads were those that passed over land belonging to monasteries, because the monks saw that they were well looked after.

When the party came to a stream they sometimes had to wade across, although, if the stream was deep, there was sometimes a bridge. But quite often the bridge needed mending.

One bridge they crossed had a chapel built on it. The priest who

looked after the chapel blessed the travellers, and they all gave him a coin. The money he collected was used to keep the bridge in repair. The man who had built the bridge had left enough money when he died

A Bridge with a Chapel on it.

for a priest to be always in the chapel, and to pray every day for the man's soul.

The Church did all it could to persuade people to pay for roads and bridges to be made and looked after. Sometimes Bishops promised those who did this work that God would let them off some of the punishment they ought to suffer for their sins.

Once the travellers came to a bridge that was quite broken down. They had to go a long way up the river until they came to a man with a boat who would take them across. He told them that no one could decide whose business it was to pay for the bridge to be repaired, so it was just left to fall to pieces.

Having to go so far out of their way made the travellers late, and soon it began to get dark. They all got very worried and frightened, because they could not see where they were going, and they were afraid of falling into holes or ponds or rivers and getting hurt. And they were not sure if they were going the right way, and there was no one to ask.

They crept along very slowly in the dark. Then suddenly Simon cried out: "Look! There's a light!"

"Heaven be praised!" cried one of the men. "It is the beacon on

the church tower in Hartbridge. Now we know which way to go."

He explained that a man from Hartbridge had once been lost at night as they were. He got home at last and he was so thankful that he gave money so that someone should put a light on top of the church tower every night, to guide other people who were lost.

The travellers still had to go carefully, but they knew now that they were going the right way and would soon come to the town. But there was a strong wall round the town, and the great gates were shut at sunset, so the travellers would not be able to get in. They spent the night at an inn, in a little village a mile or two from Hartbridge, with a number of other people who had arrived too late.

The Beacon on the Church Tower.

21

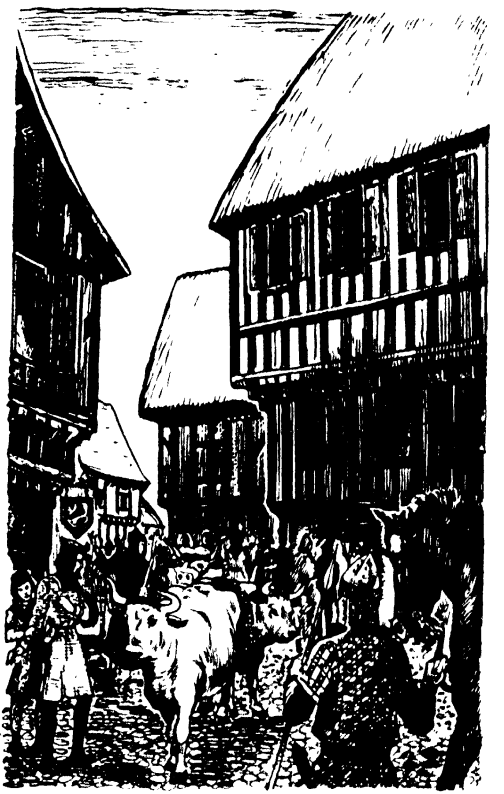
Robert and Simon in Hartbridge, and what they saw there

EARLY next morning Robert and Simon went into the town.

The streets of the town were very narrow. Some were paved with hard round stones, others were not paved at all. They were all rather dark because the top storeys of the houses stuck out beyond the lower storeys, so that people could touch each other across the street from their bedroom windows if they liked.

Once Simon had to jump out of the way quickly because someone threw a bucket of dirty water out from one of the houses. There were no drains, so the water just stayed on the ground. There was a lot of other rubbish lying about, too.

"What crowds of people," cried



A Street in Hartbridge.

Simon, as he and his father tried to push their way along.

"Yes," answered Robert. "Squeeze yourself up against the wall, Simon, to let this man on horseback pass. There—now there are a lot of pack-horses, all laden with goods. We must stand in this doorway, or we shall be crushed against the wall."

As they stood waiting while the pack-horses passed, Simon looked up at a sign-board that was creaking just above his head. There was a picture of a shoe painted on it, so Simon knew that the man in the house made and sold shoes. Another sign had a hat on it. That was the house people had to go to if they wanted to buy a hat.

There were no shops where people could buy all sorts of things. If you wanted anything, you had to find the house of the man who made and sold it.

If people wanted something that

came from over the sea, like silk or spices, they had to find the house of a merchant who had ships which sailed across the world and brought such things back.

At last Simon and his father were able to go on. After a time they found themselves in a street where there was a very strong smell of fish. It was called Fish Street, and all the people who sold fish lived in it. Simon and Robert were glad to turn into another street where there was a lovely smell of baking bread. It was Baker Street, where all the bakers lived. Butcher Street was not far off. That was where people went if they wanted to buy meat.

To-day all the shops were shut because, during the Fair, no one was allowed to sell anything anywhere except at the Fair.

Soon Simon and his father came out into a big, wide, open square.

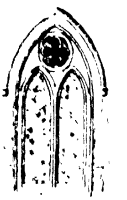
"This is the Market Place," said Robert, "where the weekly market is held, I expect, just as it is at Stanway."

"I wish Bennington could grow into a great big town like this," said Simon, "and have a fair every year."

"It won't do that," smiled Robert. "Towns grow up in places where people can get to them easily. This town is close to a big river, so people can come to it in ships from the sea. Yet it is on a little hill, so it doesn't get flooded. There is a bridge over the river here, so travellers who want to cross the river have to come to the town. Roads lead to it from north, south, east and west. So it's just the right place for a town."

On one side of the Market Square there was a large new church. Simon and Robert noticed that the doors

and windows had pointed tops instead of round ones like their church at Bennington. This church was much taller than theirs, and the walls were not so thick.



A Gothic Window.

As they got to a corner a little boy about ten years old came tearing round and ran right into them. Robert caught him so that he did not fall.

"Now, then, young man," he said, "why are you in such a hurry?"

"I'm going to the Fair," answered the boy excitedly. "My master has given we a whole day's holiday."

"Then you can take us along with you," said Robert, "and show us the way."

So they all walked through the town to a big field outside, where the Fair was being held.

On the way the boy told them

that he had been apprenticed to a shoemaker since he was eight years old. That meant that he lived in the shoemaker's house, and the shoemaker

An Apprentice making Shoes.

fed and clothed him and taught him his business. After seven years he would know all about making shoes. Then he would have to make a pair in front of some master shoemakers, and if they passed his work he would become a member of the Shoemakers'

THE CHEATING BAKER BEING DRAGGED THROUGH THE STREETS.

Guild, and be able to become a master shoemaker himself.

All the different trades had guilds, and no one could join the guild until he could prove that he had learnt the trade.

As they went along they saw a kind of sledge being dragged through the streets. A man was sitting on it, with a loaf of bread tied round his neck. People were laughing and jeering at him.

"That's Matthew, the baker," laughed the little apprentice. "He makes bad bread, and he tries to cheat people by selling loaves that don't weigh enough. P'raps he'll do better after this punishment."

22

Hartbridge Fair, and some of the things Robert and Simon saw there

THE Fair was held in a big field between the town and the river.

Rows and rows of stalls and tents had been put up, and crowds of people were swarming up and down between them. Many of the people had come from a long way off, and had been travelling for several days. Robert and Simon saw many strange faces, and heard many strange languages being spoken by men who had come across the sea in ships from Flanders and France and other places.

Some of the things that the merchants from over the sea had brought for sale made Simon and his father gasp. They had never seen such things before. There were

beautiful silks and velvets and lovely embroideries from Venice, cotton from Egypt, spices from the East, and wines from Germany and Spain. There were furs and jewellery, and there was lace so fine that it was difficult to understand how anyone could have made it.

The English merchants had wool, cloth and skins to sell, also swords and other metal goods, and leather things such as saddles and bridles. Then there were pedlars, with ribbons, girdles, combs, and other small things.

There were stalls where one could buy pies, gingerbread and other things to eat.

There were, of course, lots of horses, cattle, sheep and pigs for sale.

Wool and cloth was what most of the foreign merchants wanted to buy, for England was famous for her wool.

There were many strange and

HARTBRIDGE FAIR.

amusing things to watch and listen to, as well. Minstrels were playing and singing; people were dancing; there were wrestling matches, and young men were seeing who could shoot best with a bow and arrow, or who could throw farthest, or run fastest.

Then there was a conjuror whom Simon and Harry, the little apprentice, watched for a long time. He made things disappear and come back again in the most marvellous way. And there were some acrobats who turned somersaults and jumped over each other and twisted about, as if they had no bones at all.

There was a man leading a big bear about. He made it stand on its hind legs and dance while he played on a pipe. Simon and Harry were careful not to get too near to the bear; but all the same they felt sorry for him because he did not look very happy.

Robert left Simon and Harry to watch the bear while he hunted for the merchant from Venice. All the foreign merchants were together in one part of the Fair, but it was some time before Robert could find the one he wanted.

At last he found him and gave him Sir Edward's letter. Then the merchant gave Robert a parcel containing some beautiful silk material, and Robert paid him the money Sir Edward had given him. Then he hurried back to Simon, as he wanted to start for home as soon as possible.

Simon would have liked to spend many days at the Fair. He and Robert had not much money, but they managed to buy some little presents for Simon's mother and sisters. Then they said good-bye to Harry, the little apprentice, and were soon on the way back to Bennington.

23

Pilgrims and Friars

ROBERT did not want to travel the roads alone. He was afraid he might be attacked by robbers, and Sir Edward's silk might be stolen. Before long he and Simon fell in with a party of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury.

Thomas à Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury when Henry II was king. He did not always do what Henry wanted, and one day Henry said in a rage that he wished he could get rid of Thomas. Some knights heard him. Thinking they would please the king, they rode to Canterbury and killed Thomas inside the Cathedral.

Afterwards the Archbishop was called St. Thomas of Canterbury, and

many people every year travelled to Canterbury to pray at his tomb.

There were a great many other shrines to which people went. A shrine is a place where a saint is buried, or where something that belonged to a saint is kept. People who travel to a shrine are called pilgrims, and their journey is called a pilgrimage.

Often when a pilgrim had been to a shrine he bought a little metal badge which he stuck in his hat. The badges showed which shrines he had been to. Simon noticed a man who had badges all round his hat.

A PILGRIM.

"What a lot of shrines you have been to," Simon cried.

"Yes, boy," said the pilgrim. "I spend all my life travelling from one shrine to another."

He took off his hat and showed Simon the badges and told him where they came from.

"You see," he said, "that I have been to nearly all the most famous shrines in England, and to many in France. I have even been as far away as Spain and Rome. Next year I hope to go to Jerusalem."

"To Jerusalem!" cried Simon. "That will be a very long journey."

"Indeed it will. And I shall meet many dangers on the road."

Just then they came to a place where the pilgrims had to turn off along a different road. Robert and Simon went on with some other travellers.

Soon they came to a village where a man was standing on the village green preaching to the people. They stopped to listen to him. He looked something like a monk because he was dressed in a long grey robe with

THE FRIAR PREACHING TO THE VILLAGERS.

a hood to it, and had a cord tied round his waist. He had sandals on his feet and carried a rough wooden staff in his hand.

"Is he a monk?" asked Simon.

"Nay, he is a friar," answered Robert. "Monks live in their monasteries, and do not mix with the world. Friars go about preaching to us in English, so that we can understand them."

Robert explained that friars did not have any money. They lived on the food and drink that people gave them.

They did not own a lot of land, as the monks did, but only just enough to build a house on, where they could stay when they were not travelling about the country preaching.

Simon liked listening to the friar. He told all kinds of stories from the Bible and about the saints. The

priest at Bennington did not often tell them things like that in the church, or preach sermons to them.

So when Robert said, "Come, we must not stay any longer," Simon did not want to go. But the other travellers had already gone on, and Simon knew it was dangerous to travel alone. And before dark they must reach the monastery where they were going to spend the night.

They caught up with the other travellers at a little cottage down the road.

The cottage had a pole fastened over the door with a bush tied on to the end of it. That meant that the people in the cottage had ale to sell.

Bush over Door outside Ale House.

The hot, thirsty

travellers all stopped to have a drink of ale before going on their way.

Next day Robert and Simon reached home, and Simon had many exciting things to tell his sisters and his friends.

24

A.D. 1348. A great plague called the Black Death comes to Bennington

YOU remember that the streets in the town Simon and Robert went to were very dirty, don't you?

In the Middle Ages people did not know that they would not keep healthy if they did not keep themselves and their houses and streets clean. Rubbish was just thrown out into the street, or on to the village green, or into

a pond or river, and no dustman came round every week to clear it away. In towns and villages people did not kill such birds as rooks, carrion crows and ravens, because they fed on the rubbish and so helped to clean the streets a little.

As there was a lot of rubbish lying about there were a lot of flies and mice and rats. They got on to the food that human beings ate and made it dirty and poisonous. And the milk and water that the people drank was not always very clean either.

So people were often ill. Sometimes the illnesses were infectious. That means that if one person had the illness, anyone who came near him could catch it and be ill, too.

Nowadays when we have an infectious illness, such as scarlet fever, we are usually taken away to a hospital where doctors and nurses

look after us until we are well again. Then other people do not catch the illness from us.

But in the Middle Ages there were very few hospitals and very few doctors. No one really knew how to look after people when they were ill so that they would get better again. Sick people usually stayed in their own homes. Then if the illness was infectious, lots of other people caught it from them and they passed it on to others.

When a really bad illness started and spread to a very great many people, it was called a plague.

One day when Simon's son, Jack, was quite an old man, one of his neighbours went to the market in Stanway.

"Jack," he said, when he came back, "there is much illness in the town. Already many people have died."

Jack looked worried. He hoped

this was not the beginning of a plague.

Next day Jack heard that his neighbour was ill. In a very few days the neighbour's wife and children were ill, too. Soon other people in the village caught the illness, until there was not a single house where there was not someone ill.

Jack did not catch the illness, and he and the other people who were still well worked very hard to do everything that had to be done in the fields.

"How shall we get the harvest in?" cried Jack. "There are not enough of us."

More and more people fell ill. The corn just had to be left to rot in the fields. Jack and his few friends could not even look after the animals. They turned the oxen, pigs and sheep loose so that they could find food for themselves.

" This is the worst plague we have ever had in Bennington," said Jack.

He did not know it, but it was the worst plague there had ever been in England. Villages and towns all over the country had just as many sick people in them as Bennington had.

This dreadful plague was called the Black Death. By the time it was over a great many people in England had died.

25

Jack's grandson, Hal, decides to stop growing crops on his land, and to keep sheep instead

AFTER the Black Death there were not nearly so many people in England to do all the work as there had been before.

The serfs, who had to work on the lord of the manor's land in return for their own strips, began to grumble.

"Why should we work for the lord?" they said. "There is more work than we can do on our own land."

But as there were not so many serfs to do the work, the lords tried to make those who were left do so much as they possibly could.

The very poor people, who held very little land themselves, and who worked for the bigger farmers, or the

lords of the manors, for wages, were not satisfied either.

"You do not pay us enough money," they said. "We can't buy enough for our families to eat with the tiny wages we earn. You must pay us more."

But a law had been made that farm workers were not to be paid more than they were paid before the Black Death.

Then another thing happened that made people very angry. Every man and woman in the country was ordered to give a shilling to help to pay for a war that was being fought in France. A shilling was a lot of money in those days.

In many places there were riots. At Bennington some of the serfs rushed to the manor house and broke into it. They got hold of the manor roll, on which was written down the work the serfs had to do in return

for their land, and made a bonfire of it. Afterwards they were punished, and the riots did not do any good.

One of the serfs of Bennington who was very worried was Jack's grandson, Hal. Hal had no sons or brothers to help him to plough, sow and reap, and do all the other work there was to do on his little farm. He had not enough money to pay other men to work for him. He still had to work three days each week for the lord of the manor, so often his own land had to be left.

But Hal noticed that lots and lots of pack-horses passed through Bennington and splashed through the ford. He knew that they came from the monastery, and that they were loaded with wool.

After the Black Death the monks, like other landowners, had not been able to find enough men to plough and reap on their land. So they had

let grass grow on the land, and had put big flocks of sheep on it. And now they had lots of wool to sell.

You remember, don't you, that Hal's ancestor, Robert, had managed to get part of his land into one block, and he had built a little house on the corner of it.

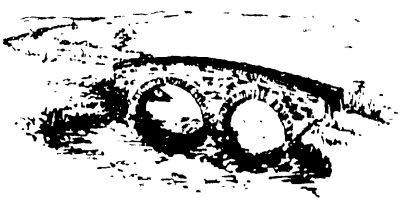
One night Hal said to his wife, "We can no longer look after all the land without any help. I am going to do as the monks have done, and keep sheep."

So Hal put a fence all round his land, and let the grass grow, and soon he had a flock of sheep grazing there.

Before long Hal drove a number of pack-horses down the lane and through the river. They were laden with wool from his own sheep. He drove them to Stanway, and the wool merchant bought the wool from him.

Hal was not the only man in

Bennington who stopped growing corn and kept sheep instead. The lord of the manor did it, too, and other farmers who had their land in one block. More and more pack-horses streamed into Stanway from



The Pack-horse Bridge near Bennington.

Bennington and from all the other villages round about.

At Bennington the lord of the manor built a little, narrow bridge over the river, so that the pack-horses need not wade through the water. It was only wide enough for one horse to pass over at a time. The parapets at each side of the bridge were very low, so that the loads the

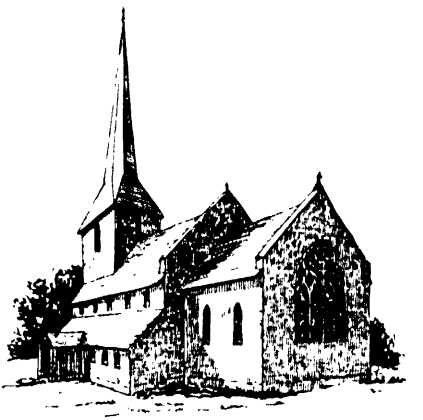
horses carried should not rub against them.

The wool merchant who bought the wool had it spun into thread. This was done by women in their own homes. Then the thread was sent to the weavers to be woven into cloth. The weaving looms were in the weavers' houses, too. There were no big factories, as there are now.

Sometimes, when Hal drove his pack-horses to Stanway, he met streams of pack-horses coming out, or sometimes a long line of heavy, clumsy waggons. They were loaded with big bales of cloth, and they were on their way to the ports.

Hal knew that when the cloth reached the ports it would be loaded on to sailing ships and taken across the sea to France and the Netherlands and then on to other parts of Europe.

The lord of the manor of Bennington, and Hal and some of the other



The Church at Benington at the end of Fourteenth Century.

farmers, soon had more money than they had ever had before.

They decided to pull down most of the old Norman church in the village and build a much bigger, finer church. The new church had high walls, and a tall spire at one end reaching far up into the sky. Some of the windows were large, and filled with lovely coloured glass.

26

Hal arranges to pay rent for his land instead of working for it, and so becomes a tenant-farmer, and ceases to be a serf

NOW that the lord of the manor was keeping so many sheep he did not need so many men to work for him.

A few men can look after a flock of sheep, but a great many are needed to plough and sow and reap.

So when Hal asked the lord of the manor if he might pay money for his land every year instead of working for it, the lord of the manor agreed. At the next Manor Court the clerk wrote down in the manor roll just what land Hal held, and how much he was to pay for it. Then a copy of the entry in the roll was given to Hal to keep.

Gradually nearly all the other men

who held land on the manor arranged to pay rent for it. They could spend all their time working for themselves. Or they could give up their land if they liked and go away and work somewhere else. They were no longer serfs, but free men.

But they were not all better off.

There was a man named Dan in Bennington. He held only a few acres of land, and worked one day a week for the lord in return. On the other days, when he was not working on his own land, he worked for the other farmers for wages.

Dan arranged to pay rent to the lord for his land, just as the others did. But Dan got old and ill, and then he found he could not get work very easily. So he got poorer and poorer. Sometimes it was very hard for him to pay the rent at all. But if he did not pay it he would lose his land.

Hal was very sorry for old Dan, and helped him when he could.

Some of the men who could not get work in the village left their land and went off to Stanway and other towns, and tried to get work there.

The lord of the manor did not mind now if men went away. He was glad to take back their land and add it to his own so that he could keep more sheep.

One day one of the men who had gone away came back to see his friends in Bennington. Hal was very pleased to see him.

"Tell me," he cried, "how are all our neighbours who have left Bennington. Are they doing well?"

"Some are, and some are not," said Giles. "Our friend Roger has found work in the house of a rich wool merchant. Martin and John are working in a great castle as servants to the baron. But, alas, Tom is a

thief and is like to end in prison, or on the gallows, and poor old Paul sits by the church door begging. The good monks at the monastery give him food."

So some of the people got richer and more comfortable, while others got poorer and more miserable.

27

A.D. 1477. The Scribe and the Printing Press

YOU remember that in most monasteries monks copied books for the monastery library. When other people wanted to possess a book they had to get someone to make a copy of it for them. The men who did the copying were called scribes. Rich men sometimes kept

one or two scribes busy copying books for them all the time.

One lord who did this was the lord of the manor of Bennington, Sir Godfrey. One day in 1477 he sent for his chief scribe and told him that he was to go to a monastery near London.

"The Abbot has agreed that you shall make a copy of a book in the monastery library. You will live in the monastery until the work is done. The book is long, but make all the speed you can with your copying. I am eager to have the book."

The scribe collected his quill pens and the knife he used for cutting them, and rode to London as quickly as he could. He arranged to start copying the book the next day.

Then he went out to have a look round. In a street near the great Abbey and the king's palace, which were both at Westminster, he saw a

little group of people gathered outside a house. They seemed very interested in something.

"What is happening here?" asked the scribe.

A schoolboy turned to him excitedly.

"'Tis a miracle, sir," he cried. "In this house whole pages of a book are being copied more quickly than I can tell you about it. Soon we shall have all the books we need as quickly as we want them. No waiting for snail-like scribes "

"What nonsense are you talking, boy?" exclaimed the scribe angrily. "Know ye not that I am a scribe? Copying must be done slowly if it is to be done well. No one can produce a whole page in a moment."

"Master William Caxton can," answered the boy. "Did I not say it was like a miracle? Go in and see for yourself if you don't

believe me. Master Caxton will not mind."

The scribe strode in through the open door. An elderly man came towards him smiling delightedly and holding in his hand a sheet of paper covered with words—a page of a book.

"A fine page!" he exclaimed, holding the sheet to the light. "There—you would not know that from a page copied by the very best scribe in the country—now, would you?"

The scribe peered down at the page. "No," he agreed, "it's a very finely written page."

"Written?" chuckled the man. "No pen has touched it. "It's not written, my friend, it's *printed*. Come and see."

Master William Caxton led the scribe to the other end of the room, where a man was sitting in front of

CAXTON SHOWING A PRINTED SHEET TO THE SCRIBE.

MEDIEVAL COMPOSITOR AND CASE.

a case that was divided up into a number of small boxes full of letters made of metal. One box held nothing but A's, another nothing but B's, and so on. An open book was propped up in front of the man, and he was copying it, but not by writing. He was taking the letters from the boxes and arranging them side by side in a frame.

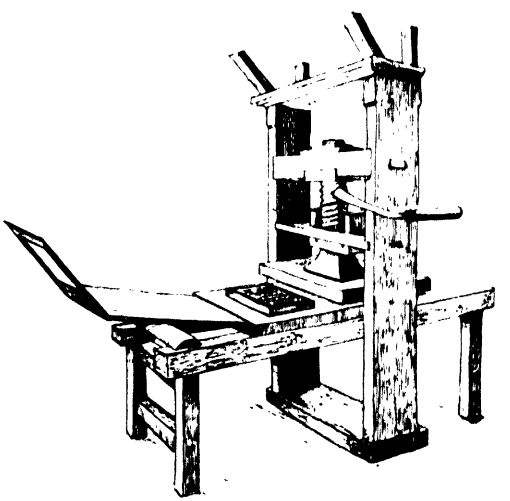
Then Caxton led the scribe across to a kind of table on which a frame that was already full was lying. A man was wetting the surface of the letters with an inky pad. Then a clean sheet of paper was placed over the frame, and a heavy weight was pressed down on top of the paper. When it was lifted Caxton raised the

sheet of paper and there was another copy of the page the scribe had seen before.

He scowled angrily.

"The Devil must have taught you how to do this," he exclaimed.

"Nay," said Caxton, gently, "I learnt the art of printing from some



Medieval Printing Press.

worthy men in Bruges, where I have been living, and I rejoice that through me my own countrymen are to enjoy the blessing of cheap books quickly made."

"The blessing!" exclaimed the scribe. "It will be no blessing to me."

He rushed furiously out of the house.

He saw that before long he and his companions would have no work to do.

But scholars and teachers and people who loved to possess books were glad to think that printing would make books cheaper and easier to buy.

28

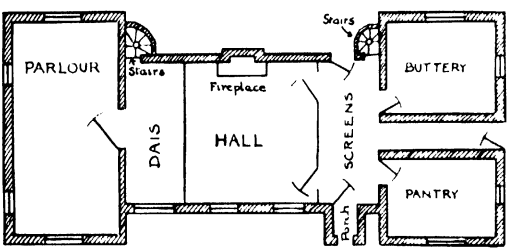
A.D. 1480-1500. Sir Godfrey, lord of the manor of Bennington, rebuilds his house, and Giles, a tenant farmer, descended from Hal, who had been a serf and become free, rebuilds his

SIR GODFREY of Bennington was now much richer than his ancestors had been. He decided to make the manor house better and bigger.

He had the great hall rebuilt in stone. The stone hall was the same shape as the old timber hall had been, with the dais at one end, and two doors facing each other in the long walls, at the other. You remember that inside each of the two doors there had been a screen. In the new hall the screen reached right across the hall and made a passage between the two doors. Over the passage there was a gallery, in which

minstrels sat to play to the people dining in the hall.

The screen was beautifully carved and had two doors in it through which people entered the hall from the passage. The fire no longer



PLAN OF SIR GODFREY'S NEW HOUSE.

burnt in the middle of the room. There was a big fireplace in one wall. The windows were much bigger than they had been before, and at the dais end of the hall there was a window that reached nearly from the floor to the roof. Sir Godfrey could have glass now, but it was still very expensive, so it was

put into separate frames which were taken down from the windows when they were not wanted.

You remember that Sir Godfrey's ancestor, Sir Nigel, had a two-storey

Sir Godfrey's new Manor House.

building put at the dais end of the hall. Now Sir Godfrey had another two-storey building put at the other end of the hall. It contained the buttery and the pantry and some more private rooms above. The kitchen was a separate building, not joined on to the house.

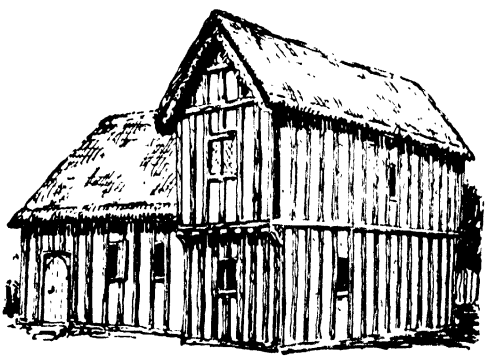
Outside the main door there was a fine, big porch.

The bigger farmers thought they would like to have better houses, too. A descendant of Hal, whose name was Giles, asked the carpenter to make him a house something like the manor house, but much smaller. Giles was not nearly so rich as Sir Godfrey, so he could not have his new farm made of stone. It was still made of wood and wattle-and-daub, so he could not have fireplaces and chimneys.

The hall-kitchen of Giles's new house was very much the same as it had been before, with the fire burning in the centre. But at one end there was a two-storey part, as there had been in the old manor-house. A ladder from the hall led to the upper room.

Giles could not afford glass for his windows. But he also had some frames made, and filled them with

pieces of horn, or linen, so that when they were put over the windows they let a little light in as well as keeping the rain and wind out. Of course,



Giles's New House.

he had wooden shutters to use at night or in really bad weather.

One day Giles and his son, Peter, climbed up the hill near Bennington and stood exactly where the Saxon, Oswald, and his son Edda had stood four hundred years before. They looked down on the village.

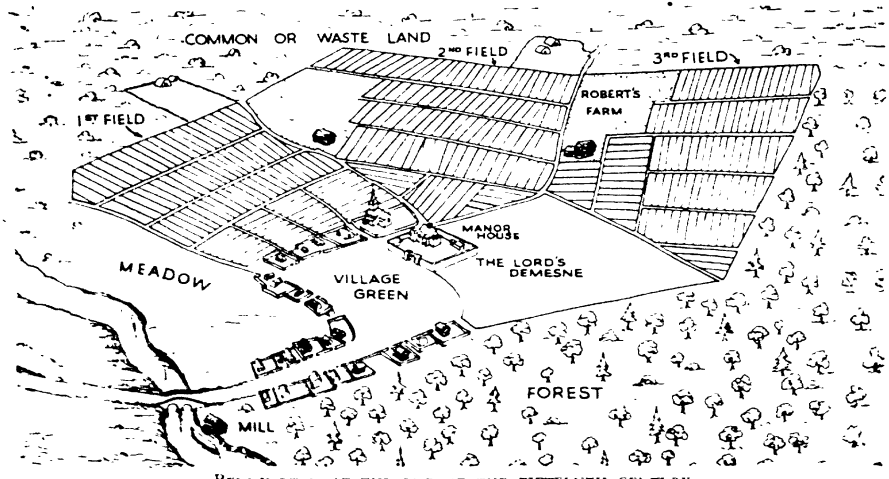
Many things had changed since Oswald's time, although many were the same.

There were still the three big open fields, divided into strips. But the villagers who worked in the fields nearly all paid rent to Sir Godfrey in money now, instead of working for him in return for their land.

In Oswald's time most of the lord of the manor's land was in one block, but no one else's. Now Giles and Peter could see two or three enclosed blocks of land belonging to different farmers. These blocks were green, and were covered with white dots where sheep were grazing.

Beyond the open fields was the waste, or common, which had not changed much.

Now, there was a fine new bridge over the river where the ford had been, but the roads were still rough, muddy tracks.



BENNINGTON AT THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

Round the village green were the low, dark, thatched huts, each in its own little garden, in which the poorer villagers lived, and which they shared with their fowls and animals.

But the new stone manor-house was very different from the timber-and-wattle house, like a big barn, in which the first Norman lord had lived. And Giles could see his own new house, and one or two others like it, which were much more comfortable than Oswald's house had been.

Giles knew that inside the manor house some of the walls had woven or embroidered curtains hanging over them. Other rooms had the stone walls covered with oak panelling. In one room the lord of the manor had a number of books. Some were written by hand, but some were new and were printed.

So Bennington had changed just a

little since the Norman Conquest of England. But the time we call the Middle Ages was now ending, and far bigger changes were going to be seen by Peter and his children and those who came after them.

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PREFACE

AS its title indicates, the object of this book is to bring its readers into contact with the daily lives of English people of the Middle Ages. This, it is believed, is the best way to present history to pupils in the middle and upper classes of Primary Schools and the lower "streams" in Modern Schools. The story is unfolded of the (imaginary) village of Bennington, and of its folk, from the foundation of Bennington by the Saxon Benna in 460 until the break up of the manorial system at the close of medieval times.

We learn of homes, food and dress, religious worship, the methods of agriculture, the rise of industry and towns, travel and transport, education, the spread of knowledge, the growth of freedom, rather than of politics and warfare. The book therefore provides at once a stimulus to local studies and a basis for them.

Living in the Middle Ages takes up the thread of history from the first book in Johnston's Junior Histories, *First Stories in History*, while *Stories of the Middle Ages* offers different, rather wider, aspects of the medieval period than are here presented, and valuably supplements this book.

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